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DEVIANT SUBJECTIVITIES: THE ULTRA MOVEMENT AND THE GOVERNANCE OF
PUBLIC AFFECTS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Music

by

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ABSTRACT

Deviant Subjectivities: The *ultra* Movement and the Governance of Public Affects

By

Max Jack

This dissertation examines the global proliferation of the *ultra* movement, a participatory style of sports fandom that entails collective continual singing, jumping, flag-waving, and the illegal lighting of marine flares on the streets and in stadiums. Having spread across six continents, *ultra* is seen by scholars (Gabler 2013) and many of its participants as a social movement that champions the continuation of traditional, spectator-based fandoms, which revolve around consistent attendance and crowd participation in contrast to TV viewership. The contrast between *ultra* and other mass political movements is that its social life is highly critical of the consumptive and individualistic aspects of neoliberal citizenship, but not necessarily married to the debates and issues of institutionalized politics. Based on over two years of cumulative field research in Ireland and Germany with the *ultra* groups of three clubs (Shamrock Rovers FC, FC Union Berlin, and Eis Hockey Club Dynamo Berlin), I find ultras' performative style of support in the stadium to be a form of social commentary and protest that is based in part on their friction with the state, the mainstream media, and the commercial priorities of sports' governing bodies. A look into the *ultra* movement provides a space in which to examine how broader structures of power attempt to suppress groups that deviate from dominant idealizations of the liberal democratic subject.

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Introduction

I had been doing fieldwork in Berlin for about a year by the time I finally made the trip south to Münster to see Sal in the spring of 2017. A member of Shamrock Rovers Ultras, we had met each other during my time in Dublin in the summer of 2012. A college student when I was there, Sal was now living and working in Germany and had become involved with the fan scene at the third division football club Preußen Münster Football Club. Hanging out at a small pub down the street from the stadium before a Saturday match against East German side Chemie Halle FC, he introduces me to his friends—members of a group called Deviants Ultras. After chatting and drinking, we walk together to Preußenstadion. Deviants are handing out stickers that read, *No Stadium Outside Muenster!* I'm told that the club administration wants to build a new arena outside the city that will offer a more modern and up-to-date fan experience. Inside, there are no seats, only a paved standing terrace behind the goal that reflects the age of the ground. In spite of its current poor condition, the simple design of the stadium is perfect for the ultras, who soon will be singing, jumping, and waving body-sized flags for the entirety of the match.

The players are warming up on the field and Deviants' drummer, Paul, talks about his upcoming court date. He threw a beer into the air after a dramatic moment that took place on the field that incidentally landed on a police officer, resulting in a beating and then an arrest. He looks at me because the others know the story. Paul twists his neck around to show me the scar on the back of his head where hair no longer grows. Some of the guys want to come to his court date for moral support, but they wonder if the judge will see an intimidating group of thugs in the courtroom. The ultras don't really embody a particular socioeconomic archetype. Comprising men and women, some of Deviants are working professionals, while

others are students at the university. Slipping in and out of normative pathways that allow them to work respectable jobs and go to school, their appropriation and identification with *ultra* offers a performative and social experience that runs in tension with their professional and family lives. *Deviants* is a fitting name.

As the players prepare for the beginning of the match, one of the ultras faces the rest of us and he begins to call out chants. Paul and another take their stations at two large bass drums, adding powerful accompaniment, which gives a Latin groove to the melodies. The terrace is filled with large green and black flags the size of a human. Made out of a thick carbon-fiber, I need both hands to rotate the end of the pole as the flag catches the air above our heads. As participants' arms get tired, flags are handed off amongst the group. Another young man sways about in front of me as he sings along. Others are holding up handmade banners. With the movement of bodies, clapping hands, and the flow of flags in the air, the game is not always easy to see. The man facing us—called the *capo*—reads the vibe of the crowd and keeps an eye on the game as he gauges what song to sing next. His charisma fuels the crowd, and we energize him in turn. With the drums pounding, the ultras have taken the melody from the pensive pop song, “Mad World” and given it an upbeat groove.

*On every matchday I have the desire
To see you, no matter where you play.
I will follow you into every last stadium,
And you'll see, I'll help you win.
Then you'll know, and you'll never forget
What I feel, and you'll never be alone.*

We sing this verse over and over as the drums' vibrations move through our bodies and the flags swirl above us. The capo pounds his slim arm against his chest for the same three words—*What I Feel*—as he looks into the crowd.

* * *

A year later in January 2018, a landslide vote of the club's members transformed the 111 year-old football division of Preußen Münster Sport Club from a *Verein* [a non-profit sport club] into a private corporation. This transformation would allow the club to lock in more lucrative investors and give the administration more spending power to satisfy their competitive ambitions (Rellmann and Heflik 2018). Uninterested in ascending the ranks to the first division at this cost, the ultras walked out of the meeting and decided afterward that they would not to return to the stadium ever again. Deviants released a statement that their love for the Verein could never be swapped out for an object of venture capitalism (deviants-ultras.org). With the standing terrace behind the goal empty and the atmosphere now a vacant husk of what it once was, matchdays were eerily quiet. For Deviants, as is the case with most ultras, the Verein is an irreplaceable symbol that constitutes the football club as a community rather than a for-profit venture. From the *ultra* perspective, players and administrators of the football club are just employees. At the intersection of capital, governance, and affect, ultras aim to cultivate atmosphere as an emotive representation of the Verein that exists in dynamic tension with the fiscal priorities of sport's governing bodies and the state's asserted role as the arbiters of public safety.

ultra

Due to its broadly held position against the commercialization of professional sport, *ultra* is seen by scholars (Gabler 2013) and many of its participants as a social movement that champions the continuation of traditional, spectator-based fandoms, which revolve around regular attendance as opposed to TV viewership or merchandise consumption. Historically,

ultra's origins stem from a style of street protest, which was incorporated into the stadium due to a decline in "political commitment" of mass parties in Italy during the 1960's (De Biasi and Lanfranchi 1997). In its current form, protest is an integrated aspect of ultras' collective performance, but is not always overtly understood as such by outsiders. Abstracted through a performative style of fandom meant to positively influence the outcome of the game, *ultra* is a radical attempt at public address.

A dynamic and flexible style of crowd action that operates outside modern forms of rational-critical discourse (Warner 2002), *ultra*'s coherence across locality is rooted in an overarching mentality aimed at cultivating and coordinating affect in public space. The performative ethos of *ultra* is about attuning affect and cultivating the emotive capacities of the crowd in order to influence the players and to impact the competitive outcome of the game. Musical as well as visual aspects of performance are dimensions of expressivity that draw influence from mass media and popular culture. Ultras appropriate imagery from television, melodies and lyrics from popular music, and comment on news relevant in the public sphere. Socialization within the fan scene revolves around the planning of large-scale choreographies, which consist of stadium-sized illustrations and are coupled with *Spruchbänder* (banners with speech on them), flags and pyrotechnics. Constructing the materials used in the stadium is time consuming because it's done by hand, which means that cultivating atmosphere subsumes one's life outside of the stadium as well. This dedication is envisioned as a form of *support* for the team. Through a deference toward tradition that is aimed at influencing outcomes, crowd action straddles the past, present, and the future.

To enact this vision of support, ultras require the emotive force of the larger fan base. Maximizing participation requires convincing the community to "lend one's body" (Gaonkar

2013) to a particular vision of fandom and style of embodied performance. Standing with the ultras means singing, clapping, and jumping together—dancing even. By lighting illegal marine flares—the kind used for rescue at sea, which radiate neon orange light and billow smoke—atmosphere reaches expressive and affective extremes. In harnessing the power of numbers, the stadium environment can be shocking—otherworldly even, when every inch of space is filled with synchronous movement, color, and vibration. In this way, *ultra* operates based on coordination, debate, and degrees of collective consensus in the stadium space. The collective-creative process in which performative style emerges can be seen through the appropriation of circulating “sets of styles, aesthetics, knowledges, and ideologies” (Alim 2009, 123) that gain traction with the local fan base. This means that participants adopt, adapt, and reject different facets of *ultra* as a performative rhetorical device. Quite malleable, *ultra* is constituted by matrices of style that exist globally through difference as much as any overarching aesthetic or ideological uniformity. It is a network of cultural apparatuses—organized nodes of public performance and cultural production—all of which are interconnected through processes of circulation, identification, contestation, and creative adaptation across locality.

Through appropriation in the stadium, public performance is a culturally productive process of both belonging and differentiation. “It’s what’s on the flags and what you sing about that makes your group individual,” I was told (Alex, Personal Interview 2012).

Atmosphere is both generative and representative of the lifestyle that revolves around recreating and experiencing the collective imaginary in the stadium. The significance of belonging hinges not only on the intensity of one’s participation, but the sacrifices one makes for the group over time. To go to every match means having a flexible job (and enough

disposable income). It also means missing birthdays and other important events. It means waking up in the middle of the night to get to a game eight hours away with your group. It means not sleeping for twenty-four hours until you arrive back home. It often means going straight to work upon your return because you're out of vacation days that you've already used to be at football matches. It also means meeting up after work to make banners or flags for the next match. The salience of this life is performed in the stadium as a representation of the most banal yet irreplaceable requirement of its members—the requirement of time—to show up at the next match again and again. At one of my first away matches with Union Berlin, I remember looking across the stadium at a gigantic crowd cover and an accompanying banner on display by the fans at Fortuna Düsseldorf—

ULTRAS
Come With Us – Throw Away Your Time

Through the socializing and creative capacities of atmosphere-making, the political project of *ultra* at large is revealed in an ongoing commitment to living differently in ways that alienate them from most everyone but each other. Because the feeling is so strong that outsiders can't understand a way of life that devotes most of one's time to a collective, the choice to live differently becomes a critique of the modern daily experience. Being an *ultra* means leading a double life or falling out of mainstream notions of social and economic worth. Discourse around the *Ultraleben* [the ultra life] confronts a modern imaginary that revolves around standardization of comfort, consumption, and individualism as unquestioned aspects of life that contribute to the waning of *passion*. Passion is thus an important term in *ultra* discourse because it is a signifier for what is normally absent—an observation comparable to Jameson's "waning of affect" (1991). In stark contrast, atmosphere is

cultivated in the stadium as an affective, emotive, and collective experience. As a part of the *ultra* experience, camaraderie bleeds together with sacrifice and suffering—a lifestyle that brings group members closer together. *Ultra* is defined by the group decision to live differently, together.

A form of protest, ultras make a spectacle of showing this difference through public interventions, which subvert and upend the normative logics of public space (Eisenberg 2013). Often startling and uncomfortable, crowd action drowns out quiet conversation, disrupts one's focus on their reading material, and upends any considerations for shared space. Public rupture is an intrinsic characteristic of *ultra* as a performative device in ways that seemingly threaten idealized notions of the rational-critical behavior and thought. In short, ultras shatter the preexisting vibe in place of a new one. At train stations and on the street, this public intervention of the crowd is an act of rupture—a show of force that subjugates onlookers to the new mood that has been established. As a style of collective action and a lifestyle, *ultra* defines itself through difference—it creates and embraces its own outsidership. Like so many groups, the ultras in Dublin recreate this dynamic through the repetitive groove of performance, singing *No One Likes Us, We Don't Care!!*

“Young men like to feel like they belong to a cause even though its only football,” said one of my closest interlocutors, Karl (Personal Interview 2012). “They like to have the idea that we're hated by everyone, and it's me and these guys who are going to stick together and represent and we don't care.” Karl laughed. “So *no one likes us and we don't care*. I love the whole idea.”

What I'm getting at is that you as the reader are never quite going to get it, just as I (a non-ultra) will never completely understand it either. However, this is in fact key to my

argument—that for ultras, *knowing through feeling* (Trezise and Wake 2013, 21) is the affective process that fuels participation, subjectivity, and belonging. This understanding earned through participation is key to *ultra* subjectivity as a transnational identifier. But this lack of outsider understanding—and further, this sense of *fascination and fear*—is the analytic starting point in which to conceive of the myriad conflicting strategies from various state apparatuses that are aimed at managing subjectivity and affect in public space. After all, ultras’ operational goals revolve around replacing ordinary affects with the uncommon and therefore unpredictable. Atmosphere becomes the cultural mode of discourse, experience, and subjectivity-making that further alienates ultras from public opinion and the state.

Entering the Field

Because ultras’ perspectives toward fandom have predominantly garnered responses from the news-media and the state that interpret their style of public intervention as a form of deviancy, my ethnographic research methods have led me to consider the ways in which governance and discourse in the public sphere impact subjectivities of ultras in the liberal democratic context. The directive of my research is twofold. Firstly, I consider social life that subsists at the margins of the public sphere yet paradoxically lives in public space. Second, my ethnography of ultras examines the role of contemporary governance in Western (neo)liberal democracies at large, which I argue seeks to manage the affective dispositions of its subjects in ways that further radicalize and insulate ultras in the public sphere. The dynamic in which ultras are branded as deviants is rarely based in concrete interaction. This makes ethnographic research methods essential for better understanding *ultra* as a form of collective discourse but challenging in practice because many groups are wary of authority

figures. In Germany especially, my interlocutors were not immediately convinced by the seemingly benign intentions of scholars who were studying fandom through rational-critical avenues of thought, especially if they were outsiders to the fan scene.

I arrived in Hamburg in the fall of 2014, ready to officially begin my proposed dissertation research on the left-wing and antifascist group, Ultras Saint Pauli. I had previously done my Masters field research in Dublin with the Shamrock Rovers Ultras to relative success, creating close contacts and what I felt to be a mutual respect between myself and the members of the group. The ultras in Dublin were surprised, but somewhat appreciative that I had approached them, wanted to get to know them, wanted to participate in the group's activities, and wanted to present their perspective—*what journalist would ever do that?* Most media pertaining to Shamrock Rovers fans was bad press—a recurring trope amongst all the fan scenes that I was involved with. This meant that when I showed up in Dublin in 2012, the ultras—upon their initial impression of me—put me to work making a choreography consisting of large banners and flags that they would be presenting at the very next game. With good chemistry between myself and a number of the guys within the group, spending time in and outside of the stadium with the ultras came easily and often. Requesting and conducting interviews was never much of a challenge. Over the years throughout my doctoral degree, I continued to meet with the SRFC Ultras in Dublin and often spent time with them in Berlin when they came for holiday. This ongoing relationship with a number of the members has offered a temporal dimension to my knowledge of the group.

When I went to Hamburg to what I thought would be my second field site, I believed that I would be faced with a similar scenario in which the ultras would see my positive intentions, and over time, would allow me into more intimate and communal scenarios. I had

a contact within Ultras Saint Pauli who got me something of an interview, and I was given the floor at a group meeting to present the goals of my dissertation research. I wanted to stand on the terrace with the group, travel with them to away games, and attend open meetings. Basically, I wanted to do everything all the other *ultraorientert* [ultra-oriented] did. Ultras were often conflated with hooligans in popular culture. I spoke about presenting my research from the group's perspective and allowing the ultras to read and comment on drafts of my writing. I described my previous terrace experience with the Shamrock Rovers Ultras, which served as my Masters field research. I talked about fan culture and police repression—issues that are intimate to ultras' experiences due to government surveillance, police violence, and the rising ticket prices that makes their lifestyle harder and harder to maintain. The ultras took notes while I spoke, and then the floor was opened up to members for questions and comments.

“We had a bad experience with an academic researcher in the past...”

... “Have you been involved in any fan scenes where you grew up?” ...

... “You can't use our names, nor can you include many of our locations. Is that going to be a problem?”

Their questions revealed what I was not—a preexisting insider that they could trust beyond a shadow of a doubt. I had two months of field experience in Dublin with an *ultra* group, but that was hardly enough to warrant their trust. Ultras stand on the terraces with one another for years. And unlike the Ultras Saint Pauli, I was not affiliated with anybody in the Antifa (short for antifascist) scene in Hamburg, nor did I have any significant connections with any other antifa *ultra* groups at the time. Was I really on their side, or was I just a well-intentioned outsider with my own motivations? What if I accidentally included information

in my dissertation that was valuable to the police? To them, I was a potential liability. And who even among them actually cared if I could present their marginalized perspectives? That is if I could ever understand. A few days after Ultras Saint Pauli informed me “thanks, but no thanks,” I decided to move to Berlin in hopes of finding a group that was open to my participation.

Insular and private, ultras in Germany generally don’t speak with the press. Ultras that I spoke with felt that the press were eager to distort their views and present them as irresponsible *chaoten* [trouble-makers]. Being personally identified in the paper as an *ultra* could potentially cost fans their jobs depending upon what employers thought they knew about ultras. I wasn’t sure I could turn a ‘no’ into a ‘yes’ with the ultras at FC Saint Pauli, so a week later I was on the bus with the active fan scene at FC Union Berlin. Unlike Ultras Saint Pauli, the ultras at FC Union Berlin cautiously let me stick around. One of the ultras in particular had vouched for me, telling the others that I had an affinity for the club. He wasn’t wrong. On the margins of Berlin in the southeast, the stadium was built by its own fans next to a forest called the Wühlheide. The stadium and the surrounding area were beautiful. I admired how the fan base sang the whole match no matter what the score on the field.

For a year, I attended matches at FC Union both home and away with the two *ultra* groups—Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts—that cultivated the performative activities in the stadium. This meant that I was spending hours with the ultras on the bus riding to far away destinations, but I was still treated with caution. Even after being given permission to conduct field research, many of the members kept their distance. In many ways, I was treated much like any newcomer to the scene—one who had to earn the trust and respect of the ultras who had displayed their sacrifice and commitment for years. Early on, I was introduced to

Manu—a veteran member within the *ultra* scene at Union. The lead singer in a band, Manu invited me to hang out with him and his band outside of football where we drank beers in the hallway and talked about football and music. To most in the fan scene, however, I was an accepted presence in the fan scene that amounted to something like a benevolent colleague.

After about a year following FC Union, the drummer of Manu’s band, Matze, invited me to attend a hockey game and stand with his *ultra* group—Black Corner. Matze supported Eis Hockey Club Dynamo Berlin, which is located in the neighborhood of Friedrichshain in East Berlin. Because Matze vouched for me, the group was much quicker to open up to me and my proposed project. I continued to attend most home games at FC Union in this second field research year, but began involving myself much more intensively in the fan scene at EHC Dynamo Berlin with Black Corner. This allowed me to address some of my original research questions around hardcore fandom and antifascist politics that had motivated my interest in Ultra Saint Pauli in Hamburg. While hockey games were ultimately the locus of performative activity, I also found myself at the clubhouse before games and at the bar with the group afterwards. These were the moments of the regular (and sometimes mundane) that built trust, understanding, and collective mentality between group members and myself. I was invited to *Choreobasteln* to help make banners and flags in preparation for their choreographies. I interpreted these invitations as meaningful—indicative of trust and a greater degree of camaraderie between myself and the members in Black Corner. We also met up and went to protests together outside of hockey.

In order to maintain the cultural narratives and social dynamics specific to each field site, I have divided this dissertation into three sections about three fan scenes [1—Eis Hockey Club Dynamo Berlin, 2—Shamrock Rovers Football Club, 3—Football Club Union

Berlin]. In consideration of the complex dimensions of power that influence professional sport, I keep each ethnographic site separate in an effort to show the varied agentic capacities and limitations of actors from divergent fan scenes. This framing allows me to show how the selective appropriation of the ideologies and performative aesthetics of *ultra* creates scenarios that alter the preexisting fan communities of which they are a part. I foreground particular cultural, political, and social dynamics from each field site to underscore how crowd action functions as a form of discourse with infinite affective permutations that depend on cultural and historical context as each scenario unfolds in real time.

My success as a researcher required entering into something of an open relationship with each fan scene. I sought an emotional connection with people and the collective imaginaries surrounding the team while evading the lifelong monogamous relationship that is the bedrock of every *ultra*'s lifestyle. My experience and analyses are derived from my long-term field sites [Eis Hockey Club Dynamo Berlin, Shamrock Rovers FC, and FC Union Berlin], but are also informed by travel to numerous cities across Ireland, Germany, and Europe for matches. My ability to appropriate the collective intimacy of *ultra* was acquired through the long hours in transit. Forming earnest relationships came slowly, and not always at the stadium. I learned quickly that commitment is shown in ways surplus to the base requirement of attendance at home games. Degrees of trust were earned during the hours in transit to faraway destinations for away games. In this way, sacrifice and dedication were the most valuable types of capital. Field work took place at rest stops at dawn and train stations in the middle of the night. It also took place on dark streets after games while evading the distant calls of enemies, or while killing time in McDonalds parking lots. Extending across

many field sites and locales, this dissertation is about the networks that constitute a globalized cultural imaginary—*ultra*. It's also about the people and the fan scenes that I naively thought would want an advocate, but in truth never needed my help to begin with.

The (anti)Modern Subject

The performative divergence from everyday affects is key to the friction between modern subjectivity and *ultra*. Drawing from Dipresh Chakrabarty, Amanda Weidman notes that the modern subject is constituted by a tension between one's interiorized desires and public reason (2006, 7). But collective participation and subsequently, atmosphere in the context of *ultra* does not work this way. With a primary interest in modulating atmosphere, behavior and decision-making are *affective*, motivated through displays of public passion that feed back into the ongoing performance of the crowd. In this way, the functionality of the crowd and the ultras' focus on atmosphere further challenges liberal characterizations of discourse. For instance, the orientation of mind versus body, the rational versus non-rational (Weidman 2006)—the crowd seems to embody the latter qualities, seemingly oriented toward embodied expression and irrational behavior [i.e. non-cerebral and irrational]. The crowd operates on a different logic of cooperation that is based upon relationality and emotive feedback rather than a distinctly interiorized version of self (Taylor 1989). The ultras' goal to modulate affect marks a radical deviation from the normative ideal of discourse in liberal democracy. Further, William Mazzarella argues that modern discourse not only represses and demonizes affect, but even fetishizes it as a disappearing representation of the savage multitude in which crowds are seen as *regressive* (2009, 295-6).

Because the ultras' style of crowd action operates outside modern forms of rational-critical discourse, the crowd provokes fascination and fear in the public sphere pertaining to mass affect as a type of public deviancy. Dilip Gaonkar argues that "within the liberal imaginary, the individual is the bedrock of social ontology, moral responsibility, and economic calculation and the crowd jeopardizes all those invaluable assets" (Gaonkar 2014). Strategies aimed at managing violent outbreaks at sporting events allude to the local government and police's fear of the crowd—that there is in fact something illiberal to it because it leads to the "dissolution of the individual" (ibid). Adorno focuses specifically on sports fans as a holdout of fascist behavior because they "epitomize the blind identification with the collective" and "are fashioned to manipulate masses...as Himmler, Höss, and Eichmann did" (Adorno 1998, 5). Furthermore, Jonathan Sterne has argued that the development of recorded sound served to further individuate the modern subject through technologies and techniques of listening (2003, 158). I am arguing, then, that collective listening and sounding of *ultra* undercuts the normative subject positions and practices of modern citizenship. In the context of professional sport, *ultra* is a subjective position that sharply diverges from the compliant norms of modern fandom—it subverts idealizations of the modern subject as an individual that is constituted by a tension between one's interiorized emotions and universal-public reason (Weidman 2006, 8). *Ultra* is anxiety-inducing because these pillars of modern subjectivity are discarded in favor of a relational and discursive style of collective participation, which through coordinated crowd action seeks to cultivate emotive extremes.

Further influencing the characteristics of modern citizenship, neoliberalism has largely conflated the economic and the political subject as one in the same (Brown 2015).

Broadly described as “spectators who vote” (Holston and Appadurai 1999, 7) the role of the liberal democratic subject has largely been confined to that of the consumer-citizen (Mazzarella 2017). In contrast to the radicalized disposition of *ultra*, consumption has proven an integral aspect of postmodern identity-building at large, as it has been shown to constitute an expression of belonging to various cultural and affinity groups (Wheaton 2004). Sport fandom has seen a marked shift toward “softer fandoms,” which are practiced through consumption of TV packages and merchandise as a form of participation (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, Giulianotti 2002). This constitutes a continued shift toward fandoms that place sport as a form of leisure and entertainment—an event which has been altered to streamline consumption.

Drawing a binary between crowd participation and consumption, ultras reject the normalized aspects of fandom that rely on *spending* as a critical component of fan praxis and identity-building. *Ultra* is an attempt at separating fandom from consumption by re-defining subjectivity through participatory performance (Turino 2008). Buying team merchandise, pay-per-view TV, luxury box seats, or sitting down in seats amounts to a passivity associated with the commercial side of the sporting event. The cultural milieus established by ultras are similar to what Davina Cooper describes as “everyday utopias” (2014). Forging collectivity out of a dystopic vision of modernity, ultras don’t seek to change the institutions that govern professional sport. Ultras exist in a double bind—they are defined by their overt and public rejection of modern sport while “creating the change they wish to encounter, building and forging new ways of social and political life” (ibid, 1). While scholars have long argued that the socializing aspects of football fandom have provided an avenue in which to cultivate fringe subjectivities (Bromberger 1993, Armstrong 1998, Archetti 1999, Robson 2000),

Jeffrey Juris argues that performance in particular is key to cultivating alternative identities and values of its participants, and further becomes a medium from which these alternatives are communicated (2014). This culturally productive act perpetuates alternative visions of community and social life that are not representative of the idealized subjectivity of the liberal democratic citizen at large. The radical application of fandom created the conditions for an alternative subjective experience that centers upon the collective rather than the individual.

In the context of professional sport, ultras often bear contradictory classifications as culture bearers—the purest fans that authenticate the team not as a company but as an “affinity group” based on elective participation (Slobin 1993, Cooley 2014). At the same time, they are also labeled as “problem fans” that discredit the safety and professionalism of the club as an organization amidst a value system established by sport governing bodies that is thinking primarily in terms of financial stability, public safety, and fair play. In this way, the professional sporting event relies on a contradictory disposition in its ideal fan—a deeply passionate and invested subject that is also a tacit and compliant consumer of sport as a leisure activity. Here is the fundamental conflict at the intersection of fandom and the commercialization of professional sport: because ultras conceive of the fans as the direct embodiment of the club (with atmosphere as its felt metaphor), there is an unresolvable fault line in which the ongoing injustice at hand pertains to the total allocation of decision-making power to professional clubs, sporting bodies, and the league instead of the fans. Directly oppositional to the interests of ultras, the organizational powers that be prioritize commercialization in the name of achieving *mass accessibility* to sport on a global scale through TV viewership and merchandising.

In contrast, ultras define fandom through physical attendance, so accessibility centers upon cheap ticket prices, not convenient TV times. This makes the cheap standing terraces in the stadium a rare space in which affect and atmosphere become mediums for imagination and enactment of alternative social organization (Magazine 2007). In contrast to such high-profile leagues such as the English Premier League or the Spanish Premier League where consistent access to matches is financially difficult, it costs only €12 to stand behind the goal at FC Union Berlin and Shamrock Rovers FC. This affordability has allowed “fan scenes” to develop around professional sports teams where habitual attendance is still feasible. The team on the field becomes the totem from which the community reenacts and experiences itself each week. My point is this—ultras (and fans at large) have little representational agency within a sport they would see as “theirs.” At the heart of the struggle to be seen and heard is an issue of representation and collective determination. Time and again, I watched as ultras invoked the metaphor of The People in an effort to relocate the value of professional sport toward the terraces, that football without fans is nothing. Crowd action is the mode of cultural production in which alternative ideologies, subjectivities, and modes of expression are reproduced.

Addressing Publics in Public Space

I’m walking back to the light rail in Köpenick, East Berlin with a few young guys from FC Union Berlin. We’ve just been making flags at the stadium for a large choreography that will include huge crowd covers, thousands of flags, and maybe some pyrotechnics. These guys aren’t ultras yet, but their involvement at the meeting and their attendance at all the games shows that they want to be. I have talked with one of them on the same train

before and he happily introduces me to the rest of the group. It's late and we're waiting in the cold. The train pulls onto the platform and we walk on together, heading to the back of the car. About to sit down, one of the guys takes out a graffiti marker. Quickly and naturally he writes on the glass of the window in large stylized lettering—

FCU

Other passengers, tired and presumably headed home from work, look on in silent judgement as trails of ink from the marker slowly drip down the window pane. The boys talk and laugh comfortably, creating their own bubble of security that seems to deflect the slight tension that extends through the train car. However, this is relatively normal activity when traveling with ultras. Their shadows cast far and wide across urban space, always finding ways to intervene in public. All the while, performance inside the stadium references the outside neighborhoods and the urban space, creating an emotive portrait of locality and community. Crowd action in the stadium is the generative point in which a collective lifestyle emerges that is contingent upon the salience of locality.

There is an insurgency to this style of performance because it presents itself through disruption of ordinary affects. Ultra signifies a different way of seeing urban space and moving through it. Graffiti specifically stakes a claim to urban space, asserting what locales belong to whom. My apartment in the West of Berlin was clearly Hertha Berlin Sport Club (HBSC) territory. When I walk by the Hertha ultras' local hangout in the neighborhood of Moabit, I recognize them from their style of clothes even though I don't know them personally. Likewise, I can feel their extended gaze upon me as I pass. They can tell by looking at me that I'm affiliated with an ultra-scene, though they can't be sure which one.

They look at me suspiciously—after all, they know I’m not with them. I try to walk confidently through their group on the way to the subway as they hang out on the street. On every block, stickers cover trash bins, street signs, and subway stops. The words on them reference stadium chants—“Ha Ho He, Hertha BSC...” Stickers recreate atmospheres, referencing feeling, memory, and place. Depending on who you are, they can feel foreign or familiar. I get on the bus at Turmstraße and look at the seat in front of me, which is scrawled with black Sharpie:

SCHEISS UNION, HERTHA BSC...

As I move east through the city toward FC Union’s home ground, the Stadion at the Alte Försterei, the complexion of the graffiti changes from blue Hertha stickers to the red of FC Union. By the time I get off of public transport, the territories have changed and the stickers sing new songs.

“Hey FC Union, Storm Out the Gates...”

I have sung this song before, and I hum the tune as I walk down the street.

“...You’re home in the Southeast of Berlin...” it continues. The stickers reference an experience that I know well, having sung with thousands of other fans at the stadium each week. It is here that memories converge with the present moment on the sidewalk. There is an intimacy to my experience in this neighborhood that I don’t feel on my own in the west side of the city. The ultras I know often say how they just feel more comfortable in the east. Repurposing infrastructure, derelict structures, and even public transport, ultras lay claim to space even after they have left. The more you know about ultra groups, the more urban space is perceptibly transformed—on the back of bus seats, covering highway rest stops, and

sprayed on passing subway cars. It's this perpetual and lingering presence that shifts the vibe of a place, making it alien and hostile, or familiar and intimate depending on your own orientation.

* * *

Through crowd action and graffiti, ultras cultivate atmospheres with the goal of reclaiming public space as a site for alternative discourse. While the public sphere has been used largely as a metaphor to describe the circulation of discourse amongst an audience of strangers (Habermas 1962, Warner 2002), scholars such as Hannah Arendt also considered the physical dimension of the public sphere in which shared issues could be engaged from differing perspectives (Arendt 1958 via Göle 2009, 291). Taylor notes, however, that modern democratic society has seen the shift from the physical public sphere to the circulation of (textual) rational-critical discourse (2003), and further, that the physical manifestation of crowds in public space often occur amongst people who lack the privilege to occupy the textual realm of the modern public sphere (Hill and Montag 2000). Rather than an inability to write (as many ultra groups write their own Fanzines that circulate in the stadium or through the country), collective action was chosen for its capacity to rupture the preexisting ambience of public life in order to use the space as a platform for critical social commentary.

A far cry from Habermas' conception of the public sphere as a space of rational-critical discourse with a direct influence upon democratic representation and policy (1962), Michael Warner conceives of publics through various lenses—as “a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space” or contrarily through circulation, one “that comes into being only in relation to texts” (2002, 413), indicating that discourse can be conducted in

myriad ways aside from the circulation of text. In the context of crowd action, physical performance and its remediation are inseparable from one another. The ways that ultras present themselves and collectively interact with current events shows that the public sphere can be a performative form of discourse in public space—that which is circulated in a variety of forms such as Facebook photos, YouTube videos, and journalistic reporting.

Interpretations of public address in the arena occur through multiple planes of mediation, refracting viewer interpretation and collective response to ultras in the public sphere, be that circulation of discourse mediated through performance, text, video, or the emotive and bodily response of participation.

Furthermore, scholars have argued for the affective dimension of the public sphere, deconstructing notions of discourse as something that operates solely on logics of rationalism (Kunreuther 2014, Kunreuther 2018). Looking at ultras' cultivation of atmosphere as a form of support, performance also relies on enhancing sensory experience, which influences affect and ideology in the process. Such a framing of collective action enters ultras into broader scholarly discussions on the embodied and experiential dimensions of political subjectivity (Mazzarella 2009, 2010, Juris 2014, Butler 2015, Novak 2015, Abe 2016, Kunreuther 2014, 2018). Through a consideration of public voicing and performance, my consideration of atmosphere hinges upon the relationality, and thus the “in-betweenness” of affect in settings where crowds engage with one another. I see participation as a relational and discursive process of socialization geared toward public efficacy, and further, that affect informs the ideologies, which shape discourse in the public sphere (Papacharissi 2015).

Casting aside notions of the individual as the bedrock of critical discourse, the crowd expresses a content that cannot be credited to any single individual. Resultantly, ultras

regularly violate the norms of “stranger sociability” in public space—what is described as the transparent presence of strangers in public and their generalized acceptance as “already belonging” to society (Warner 2002, 75). Circumventing this public norm by hiding their identities during moments of illegal activity, ultras often wear balaclavas and regularly blur their faces on social media as a means of remaining anonymous to the authorities. This tactic is most apparent when ultras use pyrotechnics, which are both illegal and against league regulations in almost every country in Europe. This collective presentation is always foregrounded over the individual—chants, flags, stickers, and even graffiti present the group to outside observers without any individual fingerprints.

What I want to get across is that *ultra* is a highly political and performative mode of social commentary that is not necessarily married to the debates and issues of institutionalized politics (though some are—see Part 1). In contrast, crowd action acts as a presentational *and* discursive medium, which ruptures ordinary affects as a way of demanding the attention of outsiders while simultaneously attracting and engaging participants. The motivations behind crowd action for ultras, then, pertain to a world-view in which the resonance of passion and community in the stadium is juxtaposed with a broadly conceived discontentment with the banality of the modern condition and the publics that constitute its perpetuation. Ultras are not outcasts, though. Rather, they are deeply embedded actors within a public arena that is subject to many competing political and commercial interests.

The Governance of Public Affects

A look into *ultra* provides a space in which to examine how broader structures of power attempt to manage and suppress groups that deviate from dominant idealizations of the liberal democratic subject (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004, Appadurai 2006, Shoshan 2016). It is through my research on ultras in Western Europe that I highlight the repressive dynamics of governance that evade more commonplace markers of structural violence such as minority categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality (though the ongoing survival of this alienated subculture is likely contingent upon the privileges of its whiteness and masculinity). I argue that public affects are at the crux of competing interests between ultras, sporting bodies, club administrations, news-media, and the state. Professional sport is one such context in which myriad national and international sporting bodies, sports teams, and the state have interests in creating a consumer-oriented event in which the logics of public safety complement strategies to maximize revenue (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016). Citing public safety as a primary concern, managing ultras activities functions through various forms of governance that do not necessarily work in tandem, but from many strategic angles. In Germany for instance, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), the German Football Association (DFB), riot police, civil police, and the *Verfassungsschutz* [equivalent to the FBI] expend tremendous energy advocating for a secure stadium experience that will streamline the professional sporting event. The management of the ultras' affective labor reflects strategies that aim to establish security, predictability, social accessibility, and customer compliance—all essential components of the professional sporting event.

From this perspective, governance acts as an oligarchical constellation of apparatuses with diverse strategies and philosophies of intervention, which exist as a highly pluralistic form of regulation (Hardt and Negri 2009). The logics of governance in the context of

football deal in risk, orienting present tactics toward a consideration of *future outcomes*. Organizations and governing bodies operate in ways that seek to preempt future misconduct based on potentiality (Massumi 2015b). Neoliberal governance is enacted through a diverse set of actions and tactics that aim to establish compliance and predictable behavior at the sporting event. As it emerges in moments of encounter, governance in its multiple contradictory forms, “targets broad national publics and seeks to orchestrate, induce, and defuse a set of indispensable yet potentially inflammable affective dispositions” (Shoshan 2016, 17). Behaviors that operate outside of these affective parameters upset the streamlined and predictable mechanism of the sporting event, subsequently disrupting the desired ambience. This friction between fans and the myriad authorities with a stake in the functionality of the event creates anxieties around fandom and public citizenship as competing subjective dispositions.

Public perception of ultras as hooligans also motivates state intervention at sporting events. The normative political and ideological parameters of mainstream journalistic reporting frame radical political positionalities in ways that often denature the nuanced positions of its participants in favor of stories that are unambiguous and culturally predictable (Gitlin 2003, 45). Reporting on the use of pyrotechnics and violence, the media capitalizes on overarching anxieties pertaining to security and safety in public space (Larkins 2015). Because media outlets present government officials as sources with a higher degree of social capital (Chomsky and Herman 1988), ultras are subsequently constructed as the antithesis to liberal democratic citizenship—that which is faceless (balaclava), violent (flares), and disruptive to the routinized stranger sociability that characterizes public space. Juxtaposing such performative and visual elements of *ultra* out of context paints a portrait of behavior

that is *uncivilized*, thus constructing The Deviant within public discourse, which always evades the grasp of authority because it can never be extinguished. Academic scholarship has also contributed to the conflation of hardcore football fandom with hooliganism, positing violence as an object of social deviance related to working class habitus and socialization (Dunning, Murphy, Waddington, and Astrinakis 2002). This logic, however, largely disregards the ways in which governance works to produce climates that are ripe for physical violence, reinforcing ultras' social categorization as hooligans in the public sphere.

It is this invocation of deviancy that justifies strategies to manage and ultimately eliminate the manifestation of such specters in the public sphere. The Deviant, as a threat to the nation and The People, has utility because it establishes moral authority to take action against it (Foucault 2003, Hansen and Stepputat 2006). As a result, an assemblage of government apparatuses (including riot police, civil police, sport governing bodies, lawyers, and social workers) insert themselves in the stadium with conflicting strategies in which to best shape the affective dispositions of ultras in public space. The construction of deviancy in the public sphere and the ways in which it is managed create experiences with authority that in turn radicalize ultras and further alienate them from the public sphere and the state. It is within this context of governance that the ultras are brought into conflict with a state that must perform the maintenance of a juridical order through a war directed inward upon deviant subjects. Existing in tandem with one another, *ultra* is a mode of collective action that engages with the forces of governance and neoliberalism in order to publicly reject them.

Alle Bülle sind Schweine!

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All Cops are Bastards! ACAB!

Atmosphere

At all three of my field sites, atmosphere was central to social life—it was the affective-discursive terrain that motivated the ultras’ primary activities in the block and central to public anxieties around their behaviors. With an emphasis on the sensory nature of lived experience, atmosphere hinges on the notion that bodies are not separable from their environments—animate and inanimate—and further that “event and milieu are cogenerative” (Manning 2013, 25). In short, environmental, and subsequently, sensorial aspects of human experience influence the interpretation of scenarios and potentialities of action.

The roots of this idea aren’t necessarily new to Ethnomusicology or Sound Studies. Steven Feld posits in his formulation of acoustemology that subject, sounded practice, and environment exist in relation to one another (2015). For Feld, this discourse has been part of a larger project to highlight the sounded dimensions of social practice and embodied experience, which have been historically neglected in favor of a Western-centric prioritization of the visual (1996). But acoustemology does not dismiss the role of the other senses in influencing human experience. Instead, Feld notes the interplay of the senses in and out of positions of perceptual dominance, creating “the tingling resonances and bodily reverberations that emerge from simultaneous joint perceptions.” (ibid, 93)

Embracing this perceptual interplay, atmosphere opts not to disentangle music or sound from broader affective ecologies and instead places them in relation to one another. While the relational nature of subject formation is an overlapping starting point with acoustemology, atmosphere places a focus on the bodies’ capacities to act and be acted upon and the relationship between feeling and action toward influencing particular outcomes. If

acoustemology conceives of “sound as a way of knowing” (Feld 2017, 84), then atmosphere can be differentiated as a way of *knowing through feeling* (Trezise and Wake 2013, 21).

As such, atmosphere can be defined as matrices of feeling that influence myriad forms of interpretation and action. Music in particular underscores the malleability of atmosphere, influencing the dynamic and shifting vibe of a place, what actors are doing, and how their demeanors change in time. Music can attune or polarize actors, changing scenarios and influencing outcomes, thus emphasizing the fluctuating capacities of the body at any given moment—what it is wont to do and what it is capable of (Massumi 2015b; Seigworth and Gregg 2010). In the context of public culture and specifically football fandom, affect serves as a way of locating and articulating agency within broader frames of power (Clough 2007, Seigworth and Gregg 2010, Berlant 2011, Massumi 2015a, 2015b, Papacharissi 2015). In this way, ultras engage in musical practice as a way to “actively recruit and deploy distinct sounds or musical patterns to make themselves or their listeners ‘feel’” (Gill 2017, 186-7). Yet this very process of participant attunement often frays the affects and interpretations of unenculturated onlookers. Musical expressivity highlights the crowd’s capacity to modulate atmosphere and alter bodies’ capacities to act while simultaneously sparking anxieties around public safety and instigating the mobilization of diverse and conflicting government strategies to manage it.

Atmosphere constitutes actions based in the present that are geared toward futures. In the stadium, songs can be characterized by a circularity of feeling and action, which feed into one another—actors sing to operationalize mood as a means of coordinating action, and vice versa—utilizing collective action to cultivate a certain mood. To operationalize mood, then, is to recognize “the continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences”

(Stewart 2007, 4), and to act with a purpose toward actualizing future events in the present. Yet the results from cultivating atmosphere are undoubtedly hard to control. Fields of action are undoubtedly complex in that “affects are constantly in conjunction with forms of power that coexist, resonate, interfere, and change rather than simply replacing one another” (Anderson 2010, 169), impacting outcome in ways that can cause crowd action to cohere or fray. Cultivating atmosphere and attuning participants to a particular feeling requires a mastery of recognizing the politics of the moment and the actors within the environment. Atmosphere is indeterminate, always in flux as it pertains to the distinctive nature of each encounter.

I adopt the standpoint that emotions and feeling are integral aspects of social and cultural practice (Ahmed 2004, Gill 2017). With this in mind, musical performance is an indispensable aspect of the subjectivity-making process of atmosphere—it is a stylistic nexus of appropriation, interpretation and reaction that the crowd uses as a means of reacting to and influencing scenarios. In essence, performance is a process of cultural production (Lee and LiPuma 2002, 192). Yet, I argue that divergent responses and fraying affects from more traditional structural logics of power play a key role in how participants within the crowd formulate subjectivity over time. The epistemologies of performance, and subsequently atmosphere, have an important temporal element. Equally important is the processual nature of atmosphere and the subjectivity of participants—it is never static, and always *becoming*. The affective pulse of each matchday is the process over time in which experience is accumulated and epistemologies of action change. As such, atmosphere is a culturally productive ecology—the realities of its subjects are conceived out of lived experience over time, helping to reveal the ways that actors perceive and move through their environments.

Sound also helps to underscore the intersubjective nature of atmosphere in that its vibrational qualities are inseparable from the experiences of bodies in any given space (Cusick 2006, Goodman 2010, Daughtry 2015, Eidsheim 2015). In short, sound is *intermaterial* because it is *vibrational* (Goodman 2010, Eidsheim 2015)—meaning that the physical qualities of sound are key toward attuning actors and enhancing the ambience of particular environments. The sound of the drums, which reverberate in one’s lungs and the bending terrace that flex under the stress of the crowd’s rhythmic jumping de-individuate its participants (Herrera 2018). The physicality of participation—the burning muscles, the lightheadedness from singing, the surge of adrenaline marked by the white-hot crack of a flare and burning gun powder enhance the shared nature of physical experience that is essential to atmosphere.

From this perspective, the boundedness of individualism is not so distinct. Instead, *being* is a relational experience, influenced by the circulation of emotion and the shared aspects of the environment. The ongoing process of participation and performance over time contributes to the subjective becoming of its participants that undercut core notions of the modern subject, specifically pertaining to individuality as the bedrock of the liberal democratic imaginary (Gaonkar 2014). For ultras, subjectivity is contingent upon the enactment and reenactment of the collective imaginary, and further, modulates in accord with the dispositions of varied actors, scenarios, and spatial environments. In this way, the collective functionality of the crowd operates in direct contrast to modern conceptions of individual subjectivity, which emphasize discrete boundaries between individuals, of selfhood as residing within the individual, and a clear distinction between mind and body (Taylor 1989, 188).

Ultras cultivate atmosphere as a dynamic, spatially contingent, and affective rhetorical device that blurs the boundaries between individual participants through the crowd's ability to act together. In short, atmosphere can be harnessed as a medium of public and political expression. I take the stance that liberal concepts of individualism eschew the relational nature of being in the world that constitutes the performative nature of crowd participation. Affect and feeling are formative in the making of participant subjectivity and action in the context of *ultra* fandom. Atmosphere constitutes the cutting edge of subjective transformation away from notions of the modern subject as the bedrock of social ontology and interiority as the basis of feeling (Weidman 2006). I posit that atmosphere is intersubjective, and that actors have varied agentive capacities depending on the particularities of the unfolding scenario (Coole 2005, 126). This felt mode of sociality guides discourse and the ways in which ultras move through the world, publicly confronting and circumventing the assumed qualities of public citizenship.

* * *

Engaging with three field sites, I consider the varied ways in which public performance is used to comment on each *ultra* group's specific sociopolitical circumstances, and further, how the state, media, and the corresponding governing bodies of sport respond to crowd performativity as a collective rhetorical device. My goal is to show how the fans' cultivation of atmosphere in public space is motivated by radicalized conceptions of authentic fan practice and further, how ultras' fascination with traditional fandom has redefined the stylistics of performative discourse in public space. Each case study is intended to progressively build an

argument that conveys atmosphere as an affective rhetorical device and a cultural realm of experience that exists in perpetual relation to people, place, and the physicality of space.

Considering external interests and anxieties around ultras, atmosphere is also influenced by the commercial logics of professional sport, changing fan subjectivities and behaviors oriented toward different degrees of consumerism, and the diverse forms of governance that seek to manage the affective dispositions of fans in public.

The ultras at EHC Dynamo Berlin, who are known for their radical left-wing political ideologies, found themselves fighting pushback from a broader Dynamo fan base associated with specters of Nazism and a connection to the East German Secret Police. As a means of salvaging traditional fan practice, the ultras utilized crowd participation as a discursive medium to adjudicate discrepant imaginings of Dynamo and to engage with the club's connection with German authoritarianism. Successfully cultivating atmosphere is dependent on the degrees to which the epistemologies of action are attuned. In Dublin, Shamrock Rovers Ultras focused on cultivating atmosphere as a means to transcend the club's financial problems and poor results on the pitch. Because Ireland's professional football league was largely neglected by Irish football fans in favor of the British Premier League, the stadium at Shamrock Rovers became a site in which the ultras protested against the impact of Modern Football. Further, the group saw their creation of atmosphere as an authentically Irish alternative to the pervasive British cultural and commercial influence that inundates Irish society in the form of popular culture and consumer goods. The group's categorization as dangerous hooligans in the media is indicative of the vastly oppositional interpretations regarding the ideologies behind and meaning of performance. In Berlin, ultras at FC Union developed an oppositional relationship with the state based on the police's constant efforts to infiltrate and neutralize the activities of the group. Such state

intervention fed back into the group's own conceptualizations of themselves as enemies of the state and re-emerged in overt displays of performative opposition toward the police. In each case study, performance becomes a highly contested rhetorical device, yielding multiple, conflicting interpretations surrounding the meaning and purpose of crowd performance. As a result, friction around the meaning and purpose of crowd action forced each group to adapt, respond, and continually consider their activities within much broader configurations of power and influence, often in increasingly radicalized ways.

Interlude: The *Ultra* Mentality

Sal is waiting for me upon my arrival in Muenster. We hug at the train station and walk through the city to a bar filled with university students. Quite young since I had seen him last (he was a teenager when I was following Shamrock Rovers FC in 2012), Sal had grown up with the members of his group in Dublin. A couple of years ago, he had made the decision to move to Germany. He mentions more than once that the most difficult aspect of moving away was leaving the group. We start walking through the city and we find a bar that looks like it will be relatively quiet for our interview. We don't quite fit in at the bar—we're both dressed as if we're going to football. It's a Friday and Rovers are playing their crosstown rivals, Bohemians FC in Dublin—the biggest match of the year for the club, but we're missing it. Thinking Sal may want to watch the match, I offer to do the interview tomorrow, but he says it's OK.

"I'll probably just wind up throwing something at the TV." Instead, we order drinks and I flip on the recorder.

* * *

"This whole ultras thing is setting a really, really high bar and is very hard to live up to," he explained. "Because at the end of the day you could just be a consumer, just pay and watch. What's the difference between that and going to the cinema? It's all about creating and maintaining the identity of your club." Sal sees the ultra mentality as a proactive and productive act. Passivity and compliancy for Sal, like many ultras, characterizes the consumer fan. S/he is presented with certain services at the stadium. S/he shows up, s/he sits, s/he drinks beer, and then s/he goes home. To sing and participate at every match for a year,

two years, ten years—this is the magnitude and depth of one’s involvement as an ultra. As one continues participating each week, intimacy, trust, and collectivity slowly become inseparable components of the participant’s social life. I heard a saying at FC Union from Ali:

“To be an ultra, means to stay an ultra. [Ultra sein, heißt ultra bleiben.]”

As I became involved in various scenes over the span of five years, I experienced the primacy of atmosphere created by support in the stadium. Karl had outlined the basics for me years before. “The ‘ultra mentality’ is, let’s keep the atmosphere going,” he said. “The whole job is making sure [the people] over here are singing, or making sure the flags are [in place]. The ‘ultra mentality’ is always thinking what can be done to boost the crowd or make the crowd better.” Of integral importance, then, is motivating non-ultras to sing and to participate—to get them to buy into an engaged and expressive mindset at the match—a mentality oriented toward inhabiting and influencing the current moment, stoking and modulating atmosphere geared toward the changing of outcomes on the field. Football often became secondary, a distraction from the spectacle in the stands. Singing for ninety minutes, ultras wave flags small and large, creating vibrant scenes of coordinated movement, sound, and color. “You don’t stand in the ultra section to watch the game,” said Sal. “That’s the one place you don’t stand to watch it.”

The growth of ultra-related news sites, YouTube channels, and fanzines have created platforms that provide ultras with a broader picture of the global ultra scene. Style and cultural milieu vary widely between scenes in different cities and countries. Visual, sonic,

and ideological components of ultra circulate rapidly, allowing individuals to adopt and adapt various aspects of performance and to integrate them into their local context. Additionally, the increasing ease of travel spurred the expansion of ultra across all six inhabited continents and created opportunities for networking between groups from around the world. The ultra subjectivity emphasizes the salience of locality while recognizing a global connection with and understanding of the ultra experience.

Each group can be characterized by different performative styles and radically divergent ideologies. It is this difference that makes ultra so conceptually fluid and flexibly interpreted, but the thread that cuts through every fan scene is an ethos of support.

“Everyone wants to bring color to the stadium—flares, pyro(technics), smoke, and flags,” Alex told me. “But it’s what’s on the flags and what you sing about that makes your group individual.” Ultra is a nexus point of style in which ideology is contested, negotiated, and even fought over.

** * **

In Berlin, my phone buzzed each week—a text. The ultras at FC Union organized a bus to away games.

“Meet at the P---. 1:45 meeting time. Tell no one the location.”

This meant waking up in the middle of the night to catch a train or a bus to a different city each week. Repetition builds mental strength, cohesion, and solidarity, developing individual action over time into collectivity. In the context of social life on the terrace, the priorities of the individual are secondary. Within the collective, priority is placed upon thinking like a group and thinking of the group. As the affective pulse in the stadium, ultras see players,

coaches, and administrators of the club as employees. They are simply representatives of the club—temporary figures.

*FC Union in white and red,
we stand by you in the darkest hour.
Players and coaches come and go,
but my love for you will never die!*

Ultra demands a divergent lifestyle, one that often forces its participants into a double life.

“It’s only the real fuckups who don’t lead a double life because they’ve just given up on a normal life,” said Sal. “You can also hide it. I hide it every day of the week. Nobody knows what I do on the weekends. They know I go to football, but they don’t know who I stand with or what kind of people they are or what we do.” Being open about identification and lifestyle is taboo and it comes with certain risk—including your job prospects and a criminal record. The simultaneous public fascination, marginalization, and misconceptions are standard to the lived experiences of every group that I found myself involved with, but how they handled this perception varied. Either with humor or chagrin, most accepted and internalized their “place” in their broader social environment.

Despite public anxieties surrounding violence and vandalism, much of the radicalism of ultra resides in the monotony of the everyday—missing work, birthdays, and weddings. This prioritization of the group is a perpetual challenge as individuals attempt to negotiate the ultra lifestyle with the social standards of friends and loved ones outside of the scene.

“What can I say to colleagues at work?” Ali said to me emotionally. “What should I say to them? They think I’m crazy. To wake up on a Friday morning and drive to Kaiserslautern. At 7 AM we go. We lose 3-0 and drive back. How do you explain that?” Understanding exists outside of explanation. It is experience that leads to knowing.

Support, performance, and atmosphere are only worth as much as the lifestyle of those that live for the club. All Give Some, Some Give All—Ali told me. The affective impact of performance hinges on sincerity exemplified through lifestyle and years of commitment. In this regard, presence and consistency are essential components that contribute to the atmosphere. “For the hardcore, no matter how—work or not—we try to come to the game. But many others say, ‘if I have to work, I have to work’. That’s the difference,” Ali continued. Unlike the fixed nature of the FC Union fan scene, jobs and romantic relationships are temporary. The football club is not. This focus upon love for the club—that it will always be there—deflects outsider experience and understanding.

*Solidarity, cohesion, and love—equally essential components of the ultra experience—are lived through the daily social life of the group and abstracted into performance through notions of “the club.” The social life of the group extends far outside of matchday commitments. “You should spend more time with these people than you do with your own family,” Sal says emphatically. “As extreme as that sounds, that’s what it means to be in a group. If you’re not going to a game, you’re planning a choreography, you’re painting flags, you’re making stickers, or you’re meeting socially just to keep the whole group mentality going.” These tasks all require varying skill sets, planning, execution, and collective consent, all with the intent of fueling the support on matchday. The “product”—that is, atmosphere—is integrally tied to group socialization outside of the stadium. The emergent social life of the group and its intimate relationship to locality are engrained in the everyday, meaning that atmosphere is a cultural product whose relevance and functionality bleed outside the stadium. The two feed into one another. In this way, support was described to me in Germany as an ultra’s *Lebensinhalt*—one’s reason for being. My interlocutors often*

reflected on their double-lives and actively chose to inhabit the ultraleben as much as possible.

But Matze laughed quietly when I asked him about an “ultra mentality.”

“I haven’t thought about that at all and what that might be,” he said dismissively, actively aware of its prevalence as a concept within the scene. “When you enter a group and go down the path of being an ultra, then you have certain goals—to make a cool choreography, to throw down a good performance with your support [in the arena]. And for that you need friendship. Friendship and trust.”

Part 1 – Participation

Eis Hockey Club Eisbären Berlin
[aka EHC Dynamo]

Atmosphere is a performative and discursive terrain, which through participation adjudicates discrepant visions of subjectivity.

*It don't feel like home no more,
I don't speak the lingo.
Since when was this a winery?
It used to be the bingo.
I've walked these streets for all my life,
They know me like no other.
But the streets have changed,
I no longer feel them shudder.*

*Alright, alright, I get the gist,
Who's city is this?*

-Kate Tempest

1 – Salvaging Fandom

Over the last two decades, Eis Hockey Club Dynamo Berlin has been awash in change. A move to the modern, multi-purpose Mercedes Benz Arena from the fan base's spiritual home in the neighborhood of Hohenschönhausen, increased advertising, and a rebranding of the team radically altered the experience of attending professional hockey in Berlin. In spite of the ongoing commercialization of professional hockey, it was during these series of changes (coupled with the attrition of many older fans) that Black Corner was founded as an anti-capitalist and antifascist *ultra* group. Through the changes in the stadium experience that included live commercials, musical interludes in-between play, mascots, and between-period entertainment, veteran supporters were forced to decide if they could identify with the changing fan demographics and changing club image, as the most basic symbols of identity such as the team's name, logo, and colors were scrapped and redesigned.

Many older fans seemed to fall by the wayside after the move to the new stadium, while attendance at the Mercedes Benz Arena actually increased. However, the space was filled with a different sort of fan that the hardcore called "eventies"—those who sat in the expensive seated areas and only came to several games a year. In a context where competitive and cultural histories are integral to the collective imaginary of the club, supporters and ultras that chose to remain fans of the team were forced to renegotiate these tenets of fandom. The radical changes made to the team and the subsequent fluctuation of the fan base also opened up intense debate over the most basic questions of "who are we?" in the standing terrace behind the goal, where the hardcore support stood for every match. As a community in flux, the ideology and ethics of performance were up for debate, revealing that

the content and style of crowd action are essential factors in cultivating atmosphere, even as atmosphere cultivates its subjects.

Rising ticket prices, a club management disinterested in dialogue with the fan scene, and the subsequent construction of a sporting event aimed at streamlining consumption created an environment that challenged the social cohesion of the active fan scene and its participatory potential. While the aesthetics and content of performance were up for debate due to the changes in fan demographics, the ultras also found themselves in a state of perpetual precarity as hardcore fans of a team that was now called Eisbären [The Polar Bears] instead of Dynamo. Their existence relied on standing terrace and cheap tickets. Black Corner's ability to merge aesthetics of punk, *ultra*, and antifascist politics into crowd support was key to leveraging their continued existence and producing cultural capital that fed back into Eisbären's commercial strategies, giving the brand a raucous and alternative image. Toggling between the logics of their radical left-wing politics and strategies of self-preservation in the arena, Black Corner was careful to temper their style of performance so as not to destabilize their position, maintaining an ideological authenticity through their politically motivated collective action in the block.

The ultras' coordination of crowd action and cultivation of atmosphere attempted to enact an idealized vision that *the fan scene is the club* despite what they also knew—EHC Eisbären Berlin is a for-profit company owned by Anschutz Entertainment Group. Both incommensurable realities existed in tension with one another, precarious and reliant on the other to facilitate the other's ongoing existence. For the ultras, *support*—in essence, efforts to positively affect the athletes and influence the competitive outcome—was the form of social practice that salvaged and reproduced traditional ideologies around fandom. Despite the

overall experience at the Mercedes Benz Arena, which reframed fans as casual attendees and part-time customers of various services, comforts, and products, the ultras promoted consistent attendance, ongoing crowd participation coupled with temporal and financial sacrifice as a means of cultural production and community building. In light of the destabilizing changes around the team that altered the demographics of the fan base, I argue that support became the primary affective and discursive terrain upon which subjectivity was contested, revealing cracks in the collective imaginary at Dynamo/Eisbären even as it was salvaged through a collective lifestyle geared towards living differently than the modern hockey fan.

Support as Lifestyle

Sport is an ideal site to examine resistance to the commodification of culture, as teams, investors, and leagues strategize new ways to construct a sporting event that utilizes attendees primarily as consumers (Clark 1973, Hall 1978, 1979). Sports fans' contentious relationships with capitalism and the state have often led to their alienation in the public sphere by the media (Armstrong 1998, Pearson 2014), leading scholars to classify fandom as a subaltern positionality due to the ways that its social practices carve out expressive space for marginalized subjectivities and epistemological dispositions (Lewis 1992, Jensen 1992, Fiske 1992, Cavicchi 1998). In this way, agency is a central question for scholars examining fandom. The subversive potential of fandom as a type of subculture is often juxtaposed with the imminent threat of its own destruction through the transformation of fandom into a commercial industry (Hebdige 1979, Bale 1998). Less optimistic arguments point to the ways fan practice has become increasingly contingent upon consumption as a means toward

communal belonging (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, Giulianotti 2002, Wheaton 2004, 2013). This tension between subversion and consumer compliance was an incommensurable facet of the ultras' experiences at EHC Dynamo Berlin. The club administration's interest in maximizing revenue transformed the professional sporting event into a form of entertainment, making the *ultraleben* increasingly difficult for the ultras to maintain.

* * *

Stuffing my backpack full of the sandwiches, snacks, and beer that I have prepared the evening before, I head out the door and hop on the subway toward Warschauer Street to meet the rest of Black Corner Ultras. Under the bridge and next to the train tracks, it is here that the regular attendees of Eisbären games drink in the shipping crates that have been recreated into a clubhouse called The Fanbogen. Old hockey games are replayed on the TV's. Scarves with Dynamo and Eisbären logos line the walls, as well as the jerseys from years past. The new colors of the Eisbären clash weirdly with the maroon of Dynamo, creating a jarring bricolage of color and referents to the present and the past. Founded during the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin, the fan scene at EHC Eisbären Berlin spans generations of fans, some who identify with Dynamo and tolerate the new name, logo, and colors of Eisbären. Most of the younger fans, and many of my interlocutors in Black Corner, have only known Eisbären Berlin. Many of them wear Dynamo Sport Club clothing anyway.

In the arena, the *ultra* groups, Fanatics Ost and Black Corner, sing for Eisbären and Dynamo. In 1954 the original iteration of Eisbären Berlin was founded as a division within Sport Club Dynamo—a hockey team funded by the German Democratic Republic's secret

police. The players were not professionals in the American sense of professional sport—instead, they were employees of the state. The Soviet elite sport system included teams sponsored by various industries or branches of government (for instance, Chemie, Lokomotiv, Dynamo). But at the time of this game, Eisbären hasn't been called "Dynamo" for fourteen years. Only with the creation of a hockey league modeled after the franchise structure of the NHL in 1993 did Dynamo Berlin change its name to Eisbären Berlin, along with its colors—from maroon to blue, white, and red. Ultimately, very little was so sacred that it wouldn't be changed in order to bring in more revenue. On the standing terrace behind the goal, the colors and the symbols of old and new exist together—they clash and yet they are inseparable. Tradition is re-expressed by the fans through remembrance and representations of competing styles in and around the arena.

More of a home than Eisbären's rented stadium, The Mercedes Benz Arena, the Fanbogen is the place where everyone comes before and after games. It's a space that is opened for fan meetings. I almost always met Matze and Black Corner here for beers or to work on choreographies, but it's also here that I met Matze's father and the older generation of fans that grew up watching Dynamo. The ultras were part of a larger fan scene that had been watching the team play for decades. The Fanbogen is also the meeting point where the fan scene begins the walk to the arena. While the modern design of the new arena feels more like a lifeless vessel that holds the games and the customers, the Fanbogen is the locus of socialization and is the only intimate space that roots EHC Dynamo Berlin to a physical place. After the team's move from the Wellblechpalast in Höhenschonhausen, it is the last location that is solely designed for the fans to hang out. Lost clubbers who wander toward the Bogen are icily redirected.

Arriving at 5 AM in the cold, the Fanbogen is dark and empty save for the silhouettes of the members of Black Corner standing outside, wearing black with their logo—a bear with a bandana obscuring its face below the eyes, like a black bloc street protester. We need to get an early start for the long drive south to Mannheim for Eisbären’s playoff game. Spring has arrived and we have been able to work outside the Bogen for the last few days to paint a large crowd cover for the upcoming game. As the sun creeps above the horizon, we take our first break of the eight-hour drive and pull into a rest stop. Climbing out of the vehicles, some people wander away to the margins to pee, while others have their first cigarette of the day. Every rest stop is tagged by myriad ultra groups—you can spot them if you know what the different acronyms and symbols on the stickers represent.

Black Corner slaps their own stickers on doors, trash bins, and lampposts, adding to the preexisting collage of *ultra* graffiti that peppers the rest stops along the highway. One sticker has the Black Corner logo and a fist smashing through a swastika. Underneath in block lettering the label reads:

BLACK CORNER AGAINST THE RIGHT.

Wed to incommensurate visions of Dynamo, the group’s overt presentation of radical left-wing politics binds and differentiates them from the larger fan scene. Dedicated to a collective lifestyle that fuses a left-wing ethos with performative support for the team, Black Corner was the sociopolitical response to such historical manifestations of right-wing extremism within the fan scene. The group re-envisioned a Dynamo haunted by histories of German authoritarianism and white power. Arriving at the stadium, our tickets take us to the nosebleeds of the arena. With several hundred fans among us, the away support is a distilled

version of home games—only the most dedicated and obsessed will spend the time, energy, and money to travel eight hours south to Mannheim. For the ultras, community and camaraderie are less contingent upon a mutual interest in Eisbären’s competitive success, and more so based upon a shared experience and identification with the lifestyle of hardcore support. As the match starts, we unfurl a large crowd cover in the away sector that depicts the old Dynamo club crest. As the game starts the ultras urge the crowd—

*Go Dynamo!
Show no mercy!
Fight until the end!
And let us be champions yet again!*

For Black Corner, a shared lifestyle marked by early morning, sleepless nights, and beers shared under the Warschauer bridge create a lasting fan scene that constituted *supporting one’s club*. Attending matches in faraway places and sacrificing time and relationships to do it were a part of providing crowd support in the arena. But this lifestyle that was born out of dedication and sacrifice was becoming a niche practice. Most of the 12,000 fans that went to home games in Berlin were transient and anonymous from the perspective of the ultras who saw each other at every game, for group meetings, to make choreographies, and to hang out at the punk bar a mile from the arena. As cultures of fandom changed toward consumption (TV sport packages, merchandise, comforts in the arena), support was both an ongoing performative practice in the arena and a social practice outside it that constituted membership to the *Verein*—the club.

The Ethos of Crowd Support

In the arena, there was a sharp distinction between those who were there to *watch* the game and those who were there to *support*. Standing terrace proved itself the distinction between traditional styles of fandom and the softer styles of fandom defined more predominantly through seated viewership in addition to various modes of consumption. In this way, the active fan scene articulated itself broadly, 1) through *standing* and 2) through a commitment to attending all of the games.

“I don’t see much from the game because I’m supporting,” said Thom. “Some people just want to watch the game. This is a part of the ultras—you’re not only there to watch the game. You’re there for the atmosphere, to keep it high.” Support was prioritized over spectating by the ultras, which sometimes got in the way of those who preferred to watch. In defining moments of the game—especially when the team needed a goal—Ecki and Burne jumped over their crates and moved around the fan block, throwing their arms in the air—confronting the fans on the fringes of the standing terrace who were silent.

Ecki stood facing the crowd and Matze sat on the railing with the drum, always an eye on each other and the drummer across the fan block standing with Fanatics Ost. I was often watching Ecki more than the game, as I worked to synchronize my own movements and vocalizations with his, learning and internalizing the changing rhythmic patterns and variable tempos that differently characterized the vast range of songs in the repertoire.

“It’s our job to motivate people to sing or through support to come into contact with us and win people over, so that they see things from our side.”

Behind the net at the Mercedes Benz Arena, Black Corner stands out from the rest of the fans in the terrace. The banners they hang read—“Women Against Racism” and “Black Corner Against the Right.” As the game starts, the two capos stand on beer crates in the first

row facing the crowd. Burne, the vocal leader of FO, and Ecki, Black Corner's capo, look at each other, often mouthing a few words so that the one will pick up the other's plan. He raises his fist and calls upon everyone to do the same. As the players skate onto the ice, we pump our fists—

DYNAMO! DYNAMO! DYNAMO!

Ecki urges the crowd around us—

“Come on, friends!” As the game progresses, his energy remains high, shouting to the two thousand fans in our block. He waves his arms and leans toward us so that we can see the whites of his eyes and the sweat on his brow. Normally quiet and reserved, Ecki's demeanor changes radically when he stands on the crate of Berliner Pilsner facing the crowd. Now his muscles are taut and his eyes are filled with fire and urgency.

*We have a D, a wonderful D,
Dynamo is the cult,
And we're to blame for everything.
Here comes Dynamo,
the E-ah E-ah E-HC,
Here comes Dynamo,
Dynamo from Berlin.*

As the song progresses and merges seamlessly into the next, sweat begins to creep down my back. My legs begin to burn as we jump. Repetition forges an affective groove and the intensity slowly builds as the song lengthens, with no determinable end. The game starts to feel peripheral, secondary.

Conflicting Priorities: *Ultra* within *Kommerzsport*

Amidst the maelstrom of crowd activity originating from the fan curve, professional ice hockey was also a site of conjoining commercial and athletic interests—that which challenged the cohesion of the ultras and the other regulars standing behind the net. The stadium was surrounded by construction work for the development of a new shopping center by Warschauer Straße subway stop. Ultra-modern in its architectural and interior design, the atmosphere of the space could be likened to Heathrow Airport. It was immaculately clean, with high windows that allowed in natural light with wide-open spaces that were filled primarily with advertising crews promoting various products. At the top of the escalator that lead to the second tier of the arena, there were people selling beer and offering free shaves to promote what I assume was shaving cream. Screens are everywhere, inundating attendees' line of sight with a variety of advertisements—tourism to Turkey, Hasseröder Beer (accompanied by the catch-phrase, “Men get it!”), among others. There are spaces in the atrium that are designed to look like your neighborhood pub. You can buy a Hasseröder and look through a wall made entirely of glass in the back of the “bar” that overlooks the rink, enjoying the homey ambience while watching the match, live.

As game-time approaches, the pre-game entertainment begins and a large polar bear head is inflated so that the players can skate through the mouth. Barrels emblazoned with the brand “Liqui-Moly” shoot flames up into the air and pyrotechnics explode from the ceiling. Our chants compete with the theme music blaring from the loud speakers and the campy team anthem pours out—

“Hey! We want to see the Eisbären! Oooohhhh!”

Two polar bear mascots skate on the darkened rink as spotlights swirl around for dramatic effect. A sausage company presents the game puck to the referee, skating a tiny wooden bear toward the officials under a spotlight. In the block, these scenes are so normal, formulaic and repetitive, that we would sometimes talk over the unfolding event, hardly noticing that it was happening. At halftime, a skating giraffe referees a car-race on the ice, which is being sponsored by Toys R' Us. The absurdity of the event fuses with its own normalcy and the experience, which is exciting once, becomes mundane in its repetition. This choreographed spectacle was the wallpaper of the event that Black Corner hardly seemed to notice anymore. No one in the group liked it, but they didn't talk about it much. It was no surprise, then, when Jay described EHC Dynamo games as "a promotional event with [some] hockey happening around it." The modern parameters of spectatorship bred a consumer compliancy that inhibited the long-term socialization and organizational capacity of the fans.

* * *

The professional sporting event is a site of global connection and economic precarity in which sport clubs often adopt high-risk/high-reward tactics in order to gain a competitive edge. An object of corporate and political interest, professional sport is seen as an arena in which companies can boost profit through advertising, gain access to television rights, and where international investors can purchase teams with interests in gaining commercial footholds in the national economies they have entered (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016, 21). Yet several decades earlier the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies theorized the cultural impact of the commercialization of professional sport, arguing from a Marxist perspective that its "bourgeoisification" had initiated the slow elimination of traditional fandom of the working class, transforming sport from a social to a leisure event (Taylor 1971, Clarke 1973,

1978, Critcher 1979). Writing primarily about football in England, bourgeoisification referred to the transformation of sport as a site of working-class social life into an acceptable form of bourgeois leisure. Due to the increased attendance of the new bourgeois spectator, new adaptations to the experience occurred with these newcomers in mind (Clarke 1973, 8). The sanitization of the football-going experience was articulated as an application of bourgeois force upon working-class masculinities and modes of behavior, which as a result, “stamp[ed] out those aspects of the football crowd which could cause offense” (Clarke 1978, 58). In essence, Clarke argued that football was increasingly being approached by club administrations as an entertainment business in which they had to compete with other alternative leisure activities such as the cinema (1978, 45). By adapting professional football into a capitalist enterprise, the new middle-class supporters came with expectations of being entertained (ibid, 47).

The subjectivities and behavioral norms of fans in the stadium were also changing as a result of the professionalization of sport. While traditional supporters saw themselves as members of the clubs that they supported, acting upon “an informal set of reciprocal duties and obligations between himself and the institution” (Critcher 1979, 170), Taylor argued further that traditional fandom functioned as a participatory democracy in which players took on roles as representatives of the local communities from which they emerged, articulating the concept of club as community on the field (1971, 145). As football was professionalized through the recruitment of players from outside the community and increasingly adapted as a leisure event for the middle-class, original fans were further alienated from players and club administrations (ibid). The broader result was a societal fixation on violence at football matches that was explained as working class resistance (Taylor 1971) and at other junctures

explained away as a sensationalist construct of the bourgeois press (Hall 1978, 20). The ultras talked in shockingly similar terms about their alienation from the sport they felt had been transformed into a show for consumers—that which comprised the majority of the fan base, which they called “eventies.”

Contemporary circumstances in professional sport indicate even greater lengths that clubs must go to be athletically competitive while simultaneously coping with greater degrees of financial insecurity. The governance of professional sport is imbued with a financial agenda that promotes an internally self-sufficient business model as opposed to one that relies on capital from outside sources such as sponsorship and TV rights (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016, 24). Seeking the best talent from around the world, global labor migration is the accepted status quo, as clubs buy and sell players at drastically high market prices in order to gain a competitive edge. However, achieving competitive results *and* creating revenue are extremely difficult to balance. Due to the inordinate price of their labor, players further reduce clubs’ margins of profit (ibid). However, despite the ideal of internal self-sufficiency promoted by football governing bodies such as the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), most professional sport clubs rely heavily on external revenue in order to make themselves competitive on an international scale, making debt and bankruptcy a common outcome in the industry. Sponsorship is a necessity in niche markets such as ice hockey, and aggressive strategies of investment and the subsequent accrual of debt are common in an attempt to qualify for international competitions that can yield large financial payouts.

As a result, capitalist logics are integral to clubs’ continued survival, making the fan block a prime site of contestation in which commercial strategies aimed at competitive

success and financial survival (challenges mentioned in the same breath) constrict and challenge the contrasting priorities and further, the continued existence of *ultra* in the arena. In the clubs' perpetual attempts to increase revenue, the patrons of EHC Dynamo drastically shifted, making the active fan scene a minority in the arena. Ticket prices, which cost several hundred Euros over the course of the season created a scenario in which part-time attendance was the predominant practice in the arena. Relating more broadly to changes in fan subjectivity, fandom has taken on a number of styles of support veering toward “softer” versions of identification in which individuals consume televised matches, achieving a much more abstract and illusory connection with the club as a collective imaginary (Giulianotti 2002). In the modern context, Giulianotti argues, that fandom is predominantly consumed through merchandise, magazines, pay-per-view, and other subscription-based media offered by teams—all of which are “oriented toward enhancing the collective consciousness” (ibid, 37) in ways other than consistent attendance and collective participation.

Marking a slow but profound cultural shift, comfort and service have become key components of the modern sporting event, reframing the identity of the attendee from *supporter to spectator*—from producer to consumer (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Subjectivity in this context is contingent upon consumption of the event and its comforts—food, abundant amenities, a perpetual set-list of entertainment, and the availability of club merchandise. The event caters to the individual, influencing newcomers' standards and expectations regarding behavior, participation, and subjectivity—softening the affective collective experience. The comforts of service teach an embodied compliance resulting in an atmosphere characterized by a waning of affect (Jameson 1991). Karl described the ethos of modern sport in another way—“sit down and shut up.”

However, the administration's fiscal strategies aimed at creating a leisure event existed in tension with the ultras' cultural value to the club. Fan culture has proven itself to be a valuable asset for teams who are able to package and commodify it. In essence, the cultural reputation of a fanbase can dramatically impact the consumer's interest in purchasing and wearing a club's official merchandise and going to the event itself. Aware of the value of identity-as-difference (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 18), cultural identity was a potential part of the event to be made available for mass consumption. My point here is that the ultras played an integral role in cultural production that the club was able to commodify through merchandise and ticket sales. This method of branding has proven successful in other contexts—a prime example being FC Saint Pauli—a second division football club whose skull-and-crossbones logo have become synonymous for left-wing politics and the punk subculture from which the fanbase emerged, resultantly making their merchandise as popular as the wealthiest and most athletically competitive teams in Germany. Similarly, Black Corner's overt stance in banners and choreographies against racism and homophobia were orientations that administrators were more than willing to use to market the club. The politics of Black Corner in tandem with their punk aesthetic presented an edgy and progressive image that defied the team's traditional reputation as The Nazi Club.

I was told that Daniel—a fan liaison for the club—had to actively sell the financial value of Black Corner to the club administration. Matze was happy to provide cultural capital for the club—to help contribute to the team's financial survival and competitive success. As an anarchist, Matze's pragmatic position took me by surprise, but he was willing to accept the circumstances that facilitated the club's continued existence over the alternative of non-existence.

The Social Impact of Financial Precarity

As Black Corner became an established group in the fan curve in 2007, the organizational structure of the team had also been changing to adapt to a unified and capitalist Germany. When the German Ice Hockey League (DEL) was founded in 1993, the team adapted to fit within the American franchise model of professional sport in order to join the new league. The club eventually shifted from a *Verein* to a GmbH, which changed the team legally into a corporate for-profit entity. In German sport under the *Verein* system, fans are afforded the opportunity to become members of their club and as such are able to vote on decisions. This is a crushing blow from an *ultra* perspective, which adheres principally to the notion that the club not only belongs to the fans, but that *the club is the fans*.

“It’s not a real *Verein* (sport club) like it used to be in the GDR,” said Matze. “For the fans at EHC Dynamo, there is no right of participatory management anymore [*Mitbestimmungsrecht*]. These conditions that football fans never want to have—what they’re fighting against—*we have already*.” Key to the ideological connection with the *Verein* is the right of the fans to participate in management, a ritual that symbolizes the connection between the community and the club. Through the club’s shift to an American franchise model of professional sport, the administration wrested away the legal right to democratic involvement in the club’s decision-making, thus depriving fans of this ritualized enactment.

Another massive blow to “tradition,” the team also officially changed its name in 1994 from EHC Dynamo Berlin to Eisbären Berlin—giving itself a mascot and a logo that reflected the visual aesthetics of other NHL franchises. The change, I was told, was to help shed the image of the team as The Nazi Verein. However, Eisbären also bought the rights to

the Dynamo name to use it strategically as they saw fit. But even after the shift, it was difficult for Dima to tell friends that he went to Eisbären Berlin. “Everyone knew, ok, it’s a Nazi club. In my [antifa] friend circle, I told them otherwise, but for them initially it was a Nazi club and you don’t go there.”

Yet through the years, a fan base continued to grow despite the right-wing presence. Amidst the dominance of an organized and physically hardened core of right-wing fans, an older generation of left-wing fans called Red Star formed to protect themselves against the hooligan element within the fan scene. Black Corner was founded in 2007, growing to around twenty-five members by the time I arrived in 2016. By the mid 2000’s Eisbären Berlin had attracted a sizable following, as the Wellblech Palast was filling up to capacity—around 8,000. Ultimately, the club made the decision to move to the Mercedes Benz Arena in Friedrichshain, a larger multi-purpose arena, which was also home to the professional basketball team Alba Berlin and numerous high-profile concerts and events throughout the year. The decision to restructure the club into a GmbH, to rebrand itself as the Eisbären, and to move from “The Welli” to the Mercedes Benz Arena—all financially motivated—had a dramatic impact on the types of fans in attendance. Ticket prices continued to rise slowly and the move attracted a different clientele at the new arena, while simultaneously dissuading some of the original fan base to continue attending home games. “There were some old fans that stayed away because they didn’t want anything to do with the new multi-functional arena, and then there were many ‘event-oriented’ people who wanted to see the new arena, but I think the core [of the original fan base] are still there,” said Jay. “There are people who are there that have been going for 20 or 25 years to ice hockey games and this Nazi problem also came from BFC’s [Berliner Fußball Club’s] close proximity to the ice hockey arena.”

Logics of Compromise

Ecki told me how the Welli had a unique atmosphere—something that could not be fully captured in the new arena. “There is a special energy to go into Wellblech Palast when you watch hockey,” said Ecki. “You think of earlier days and how it was. Sometimes you look at the ice and you daydream. You don’t follow the game at all because you’re thinking of a totally different game.” Because the arena was smaller, the atmosphere was distilled, more intense. Fans were packed closer together and the roof was lower, trapping the noise. Constructed as a multi-purpose facility and concert venue, the Mercedes Benz had acoustics designed for high volume concerts, which effectively dampened noise.

“Would you prefer to be at The Welli?” I asked.

“I would prefer that Wellblech Palast isn’t forgotten,” Ecki said slowly. “That would be good. I know that won’t change and we will play in this [Mercedes Benz] arena. I know it. But we can’t forget it. And it could be really easy to say ‘we’re putting together a pre-season tournament or an end of the season party at The Welli—not in this loveless, heartless, commercialized [Mercedes Benz] Arena—because it has nothing to do with the fans that are there.” Our interview was the only time that Ecki said what he really thought about the Mercedes Benz Arena. I had expected so many complaints when I began spending time with Black Corner—expressions of injustice at such a move, even though it had happened years earlier. Ultras’ connection to and memory of place was normally so important. People talked about the Welli *and* the Mercedes Benz Arena sparingly and I usually had to bring it up to find out what I was already pretty sure I knew the answer to.

Renting out time slots in the new arena, the space did not feel like a new home for the fans—there was no intimate connection. Much of this lack of intimacy had to do with the club selling bits and pieces of the event to sponsors. “It’s annoying—it’s unbelievably annoying,” Jay complained. “[The sponsors’] presence is always increasing. The last two minutes are presented by Company X and the team’s entrance presented by Company Y. It’s totally awful when there’s a Powerbreak and the announcer greets the sponsors—it’s just everywhere.” Pieces of the game were sold off, creating an increasingly sterile and placeless environment in which the games took place.

“Lots of people say the Welli is gross, that it stinks, that everything there is rusty and old, and lots of people like the new arena and it can fit 8,000 more people and you have more seats and they’re padded and it’s a bit warm and pretty, but hockey doesn’t need it,” Jay argued. “They need players and fans.” As increasing fragments of the fan experience were commodified, the structural qualities of the new stadium seemed to encourage complacency through comfort. The event was designed for softer versions of fandom that the ultras did not see as real fan culture.

These policies and changes had a significant impact on the development of the fan block, forcing fans to situate themselves in radically different circumstances from a decade ago—in a new stadium, with a new team name, surrounded by casual fans, and inundated with advertisements. Conceiving and performing subjectivity in such rapidly changing social, political, and commercial contexts was—for the ultras—a constant process of reflection, debate, and negotiation on how to proceed as a precariously perched minority within the arena. “We try to deal with the situation and to live our *ultraleben* anyhow,” said Matze. But

this challenge that he casually posited as a daily obstacle was, in fact, a monumental and ongoing task.

The *ultraleben* and the left-wing politics of the group were often incommensurable with the club administration's financial decisions. In a perfect world, the fans would support the team in a hockey specific facility that was standing terrace (as opposed to seated) with minimal advertisements and the fans would be afforded decision-making rights within the structure of the club management. However, the capitalist structure of the current model of professional hockey alienated the ultras from the event and removed all democratic elements that served to legitimize the notion that the fans were the club.

“I don't have the feeling that the [club administration] are very honest, but they're still coming to meetings once in a while to try and explain what they're doing even if I think that it's just business,” said Marco. “Hockey at that level is pure business—what happens to a hockey club that makes no money in the end? We saw that in Hamburg. [The team no longer exists]”

From the perspective of the fan curve, it seemed that revenue was the administration's constant strategic focal point with which to relieve the club from its financial precarity. “The Eisbaren were so bad that no one wanted to watch that wasn't a hardcore fan,” said Jay. “The team didn't have any money for away trips. They were in such a precarious financial situation that when they said in Nuremberg that we'd like to have a hotel for the players, they would have to prepay because they didn't know if the Eisbaren could pay the bill. They really had no money—nothing.” Decisions were motivated by finance, and as Jay explained, the team was at the mercy of investors. The move to the Mercedes Benz Arena, ticket prices,

and the name change heavily altered the fan base—those who could not or would not continue to pay the rising prices to attend the matches in the new arena.

The reality, as I was reminded often by members of Black Corner, was that where we were standing—and our emplacement within an American model of the professional sporting event—was necessary for the continued existence of the club. There was a thin margin between extinction, financial precarity, and competitive success. The Hamburg Freezers were one such visible example of a professional team in which the owners, Anschutz Entertainment Group, decided not to reapply for a license to play in the Germany Ice Hockey League (DEL) because of the club’s lack of profitability (Penfold 2016). I asked Jay if the standard position of ultras “Against Modern Football” (a widespread ideological position amongst ultras that commercialist and revenue-seeking strategies marginalized “real” fans [See Chapter 2]) applied to Black Corner in the hockey context.

“You have to be realistic in hockey,” she said. “We can’t say, Under Armor is our outfitter and they support the US Army and we think that’s shit—you have to be thankful that someone wants to give you money in German hockey. It’s a money losing business.” Taking an ideological position against the ethics of capitalism and corporations’ business practices was a luxury that the club didn’t have—and as a result, one that the ultras could not realistically protest either.

Rising Ticket Prices and Fan Protest

Professional sports teams and leagues have increasingly adopted commercial strategies to maximize revenue in order to remain athletically competitive. However, in constructing an increasingly commercialized stadium experience and attracting more

consumers who will consume this particular model of the sporting event, stadiums have become sites in which socialization on the terrace, acceptable behavior, and subsequently atmosphere have become contested components of the matchday experience. The arena is a site in which the commodification of the event streamlines behavior through various strategies meant to increase revenue. But it is also a site of contestation. In particular moments of ideological rift, the fan curve acts a site of public address, interpersonal debate and coordination as it relates to participation and performance—a site of conflict in which ultras and “regulars” negotiate ideology and identity amidst heightening conditions of existential precarity. Pushed to the breaking point, fans attempted to uphold the democratic ideals of the *Verein*—that the fans are the club—despite their participatory irrelevance within the GmbH model of modern hockey.

At the end of the 2016-17 Season, the club announced that it would raise season ticket prices for the upcoming year. Tickets to ice hockey were already comparatively expensive to football—*Stehplatz* [standing terrace] cost about twice as much at Eisbären as it did at FC Union Berlin. Costing hundreds of Euros, the hike in prices continued to threaten the continuity of the active fan scene, many of whom could not easily afford a season ticket already. Thom who was in Black Corner and a woodworker’s apprentice, made around €400 a month—hardly enough to live off of, and certainly not enough to afford the luxury of a season ticket to Eisbären. He was able to continue to attend because his parents bought it for his birthday. Thom pointed out that raising ticket prices doesn’t affect the people who go to several games a year, but it can threaten to phase out the fans who are attending all the games—the active fan base in the fan curve. The rise in prices was an issue because it threatened the accessibility of the event to all demographics and the existence of the active

fan scene, which depended on continuity through attendance. Part time attendance broke collective coordination, transforming the stadium into a collection of individuals.

After a general meeting at the Fanbogen, the fans in attendance decided to spearhead a protest in the arena against the rising ticket prices. Pamphlets were made before the match explaining to everyone in the fan curve why a protest was being staged and the significance of the price hike, but the ultras began handing out the pamphlets too close to the beginning of the match. Distribution wasn't adequate, and I wasn't convinced that the fliers were reaching everyone in the fan curve. The plan was to walk out of the arena in the tenth minute, bringing the entire fan curve into the mezzanine for the rest of the period, and while the majority of the fans left, a significant minority stayed to watch the game. No one was sure if they decided to opt out of the protest or if they didn't receive a pamphlet at all. Fanatics Ost raised a large black banner in the middle of the block that read—

THE CULTURE IS WALKING OUT.

Afterward, Jay came up to where we were standing in the mezzanine with her camera and showed us the photos, somewhat disappointed. The protest could have sent an emphatic message, but with the number of fans who had stayed behind in the fan curve, the gesture felt somewhat counterproductive. A cohesive and united fan curve would have shown the active fan scene's affective power. I worried instead that it proved their weakness. And even had the protest gone exactly to plan, the organizers knew that the *Aktion* was largely symbolic.

“The club doesn't give a fuck, honestly,” said Marco. “That's my opinion. You all paid, so if you leave we don't care. We got your money. We're trying to fight for the fans and for the longevity of the fan base and maybe the club will see that one day or they have to

accept that the fan base and [along with it] the atmosphere at the arena will disappear,” Marco said. While the visual gesture of protest was not fully realized, the protest nonetheless demonstrated the connection between atmosphere and fan culture. Without the socialization and coordination of the active fan scene, the affective and emotive qualities of support would be lost in the arena. Without the ultras, the arena was quiet. Protest—and with it, the silence of refusal—created an affective void to show what things would be like if they were not there. The affective void was meant to demonstrate the ultras’ value to the administration, though it did not elicit any visible change in policy or engagement with the active fan scene.

* * *

Throughout this chapter, I have aimed to show the commercial strategies that create an increasingly precarious and difficult landscape for the ultras, who subscribe to traditional notions of support and fandom. I have shown the changing state of professional hockey (and sport more generally) as one in which teams were forced to drastically restructure themselves in order to achieve financial stability. My point through all of this, is to underscore the tangible change in fan subjectivities impacted by the cultural logics of capitalism and the ways that the ultras have attempted to salvage “fan culture” and “tradition” through crowd action. As the club administration took steps to increase revenue [moving the team’s home to the Mercedes Benz Arena] and shed its old image as The Nazi Verein [changing its logo and colors], “softer” fandoms revolving around gradients of consumption of the event and club merchandise became standardized ways of expressing belonging to a more diffuse and less locationally contingent collective imaginary (i.e. the fan curve in the arena). Through the sporting event constructed by the Mercedes Benz Arena, fans were recast as consumers. Yet

while the fan base continued to expand in ways that favored less frequent visits to the arena, the active fan continued to survive. However, the ultras saw themselves in sharp contrast to the eventies who casually frequented the arena for a night out with friends or the fans who in the American style wore player jerseys. The commercial design around Eisbären games made it more difficult to maintain a coordinated and organized fan scene.

Constructing a lifestyle around *support* was a comparatively radical idea in contrast to the convenience of fandom as leisure. At the same time, Black Corner was forced to compromise these idealized visions of support and community if they wished to keep attending games. Maintaining and growing the active fan scene at EHC Dynamo Berlin was increasingly difficult with the continued rise of ticket prices and the unsuitability of the event toward the ultras' style of support. Under the strain of all the changes occurring at the club, historical interpretations of Dynamo, varying degrees of acceptance of the new team name, and contrasting engagement with the political history of Berlin created ample opportunity for divergent conceptions of the collective imaginary in the arena. As I will show in Chapter 2, these rifts revealed themselves through the protest of administrative decisions and collective refusal when performative content didn't match the ethics of its participants.

The ultras' affective labor functions in spite of the commercial mechanisms of the event, simultaneously enhancing its affective and emotive qualities. But I have also argued for the ultras' utility within the financial interests of the club administration. Specifically affect and culture are both targets from which groups with financial interests seek to expropriate value (Hardt and Negri 2009). Despite the radical nature of the group's politics and the illegal nature of some of their performative practices, Black Corner proved themselves valuable for their affective labor and fashionable left-wing aesthetic in the fan

curve. Key to Black Corner's survival in the arena, the ultras are valuable *because of* their cultural production in the block, in spite of the repressive circumstances that make these practices increasingly difficult to maintain. In this way, ultras subversive rhetoric and collective action are ripe for appropriation by the clubs and governing bodies that use culture and affect to market the sporting event.

In the context of professional sport, the culturally reproductive aspect of crowd action that constitutes a radical alternative to softer fandom rests uneasily close to its additional role as a mode of salvaging traditional imaginings of fandom. The logics of compromise are essential elements of group strategy that negotiated the group's continued existence in an increasingly marginalizing social scenario. For Black Corner, this meant not causing too many problems for the club administration and adapting to the many changes implemented by the club over time if they wished to remain in the arena. Around the time I was finishing up my fieldwork in Berlin, Black Corner deliberated whether or not to boycott the Senior Team's games altogether and instead attend the youth team games that were still held at The Welli. After holding a group meeting, they decided to continue attending matches at the Mercedes Benz Arena. Drinking Mate as we sat in the grass on a warm spring day, Matze told me it was not yet time to abandon professional hockey.

2 – Living with Ghosts

Heading to a series of counterdemonstrations in East Berlin against the NPD, a radical right-wing political party in East Berlin, I am meeting Matze at the train station. We hug and he tells me what to expect and how we must prepare for the demo. Exchanging phone numbers and writing down each other's full names, Matze explains that this information is essential if one of us is to get arrested today. With it we can call the lawyers that will work to get us out on bail.

Matze and I are among a group of several hundred counterprotesters who will be following members of the NPD around the city. The political party has contested the official borders of Germany in addition to the legitimacy of the EU, claiming it to be a contemporary reanimation of the Soviet Union. In neighborhoods outside the center of Berlin like Weißensee, the NPD had banners villainizing Muslims with overtly cartoonish and fear-inducing graphics. In Köpenick, they posted banners attempting to attract ultras to the party, claiming that “pyrotechnics are not a crime.” Whenever a right-wing political rally or protest was held in Berlin, various left-wing groups would organize counterdemonstrations and mobilize protesters. Many of the members of Black Corner met at protests first and then began going to Dynamo games and standing with Black Corner.

At our first stop in the district of Weißensee, we convene with Jay, Ecki, Mäx, and Marco. The atmosphere at the counterprotest oscillates between carnival and tension—it is welcoming to newcomers and militantly oppositional to the NPD, who the antifascists casually brand as Nazis. The crowd around us is young, ranging from teenagers to young adults. Speckled into the crowd are *Kein Mensch Ist Illegal* [No One is Illegal] and *Refugees Welcome* t-shirts. The leaders of the demonstration have rented a flatbed truck and rigged up

a sound system that is blaring antifascist punk rock. Unable to hear anything other than our own music and impassioned speeches calling out racism and xenophobia, the tactics of the counterprotesters are meant to drown out the chants of the NPD across the square. Despite several individual skirmishes with police and politically conservative residents, we sit around in the heat, drink cheap beer, and chat. Protest and hockey are sites in which crowd action mixes with socialization and ideological conflict. Many of the members of Black Corner met at protests first and then began standing together at EHC Dynamo's hockey games.

“I met Jay and Max at some demos in the city a few times—we were running from the police,” he said. “Jay and Max looked at me—‘don't I know you from somewhere?’”

“Yeah, the stadium!”

“Ah what are you doing here?” they asked.

“Same as you are,” he said laughing. “Running from the police!” An epistemological intersection for the members of the group, protest and hockey are both sites of political intervention and potential social change through which crowd action serves as a primary rhetorical device.

* * *

In the arena, Black Corner Ultras saw it as their job to coordinate participation in the hopes of influencing the competitive outcome of the game. While the drive to influence the team's competitive results gets at the heart of *ultra* as a global style of fandom, Black Corner was equally reflexive about the politics of participation itself, grappling with the ways that the club was still affiliated with East German authoritarianism and Nazism in the contemporary German imaginary. In East Germany, Sport Club Dynamo was sponsored by

the secret police called the Stasi, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was later dominated by a right-wing hooligan fan scene in the 1990's. Though the club management had eliminated most of the right-wing presence in the arena through decisions to move to a new stadium and raise ticket prices, specters of the historical and political continued to enflame public anxieties in which Dynamo continued to represent a convergence of the East German subject [the Ossi] with being right-wing [Rechte] (Shoshan 2008, 261). In dealing with such stigmas, the second *ultra* group, Fanatics Ost, attempted to circumvent these historical narratives in order to create a depoliticized and nostalgic portrayal of EHC Dynamo and East Berlin. The club management was also motivated to suppress the team's stigmatic political and historical affiliations, changing their name from EHC Dynamo Berlin to EHC Eisbären Berlin in 1993. The fans, however, never stopped singing for Dynamo in the arena, holding onto the old team name as a source of pride and heritage. Opposition fans, eager to remind them what they were, didn't forget the club's history either. Rather than work to erase the team's heritage, Black Corner continued to sing for Dynamo in the terraces while contesting the parameters of acceptable public behavior and performance.

While Eduardo Herrera has depicted the performative nature of soccer fandom as granting degrees of anonymity that enable structurally violent forms of public expression (2018), I take an analytic approach that highlights crowd action as a discursive process between participants—that which negotiates discrepant identities and ideologies through collective action. For Black Corner, discourse over the politics of performance meant abstaining from singing preexisting content that they deemed racist, sexist, or homophobic at Eis Hockey Club Dynamo. Black Corner was also beginning to insert overtly antifascist discourse into the arena as well—a strategy meant to assert the collective values of the group.

In engaging with the preexisting *Ossi/Recht* mythos, Black Corner entered into a paradoxical scenario in which Dynamo became an acknowledged marker of pride and shame. With this awareness in mind, the group utilized the visual and sonic aesthetics of crowd support to envision social and political alternatives in the arena. For Black Corner, I argue that *performance was grounded in supporting the club as a political action*. The ethos of street protest was appropriated and reapplied to crowd participation as an alternative vision of Dynamo that embraced its political and historical stigma. With goals toward transforming the fan scene into a more politically and ethically minded community, crowd action was motivated by a need to rectify manifestations of Germany's past through a concerted engagement with Dynamo's specters.

Accounting for the Past

Black Corner's antifascist style of support must be contextualized within a broader field of German political discourse in which right-wing extremism has attained a degree of legitimacy in government and the public sphere at large. Paradoxically, however, contemporary German politics are also defined by the authoritarian specters of the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic, instigating many competing and conflicting strategies of governance from which to manage right-wing extremism's ongoing proliferation in German society at large (Shoshan 2008, 2016). Like many emerging political parties across Europe, racist and xenophobic political discourse from far-right political parties such as the AFD (Alternative for Deutschland) have begun asserting their mainstream legitimacy by seeking change based within institutionalized democratic pathways (Teitelbaum 2017). Specifically, immigration and refugee policies have gained particular political significance in

Germany. Seen as a civilizational threat to Europe (Asad 2003, Bunzl 2005), Muslims have become a persistent site of anxiety in the right-wing political imaginary. Xenophobic tendencies are articulated by narratives in which refugees economically threaten the continent's white lower class (Holmes 2000), forging the impression that refugees and immigrants take away jobs from its preexisting citizenry (Shoshan 2016, 32) and flaunt their cultural difference rather than integrate themselves into the preexisting cultural milieu (Gingrich and Banks 2006). While governance in Germany has been largely designed to manage and ultimately mitigate right-wing extremism in the public sphere (Shoshan 2016), antifascism trends toward a more militant approach to banish it.

Such contemporary political trends are particularly relevant to the Black Corner Ultras because of Dynamo's association with the East German state and right-wing extremism. Founded in 1954, ice hockey was one of the high-performance divisions at Sport Club Dynamo, which was sponsored by the state secret police during the time of the communist German Democratic Republic. Despite the fact that Eisbären now represented East and West Berlin, the fan scene still came almost entirely from East Berlin. The generations of fans at "Eisbären" had in fact been watching "Dynamo" up until 1993. I was told that players in the East German system were often employed by the secret police in various capacities or utilized as snitches—making Dynamo's hockey team not only a symbolic manifestation of the political oppression of the time, but also directly implicating the players in the government's intensive regime of surveillance. Sport Club Dynamo was synonymous with the establishment, and the club's success enacted its power—EHC Dynamo won the East German Championship fifteen times.

Yet the history of Dynamo was an indispensable component of the collective imaginary despite its historical shame for many fans in a contemporary context. This need to remember and honor Dynamo was only significant to the active fan scene, and much less relevant to the eventies. At the Fanbogen and in the fan curve, sweatshirts, jerseys and jackets with the Dynamo logo were points of pride. Yet Dynamo's pride in being a *Traditionsverein* also came with uncomfortable realities about *who* comprised the fan base, and what historical traditions and ideologies were being revered. The reputation of Dynamo was widespread throughout Germany—one that merged between EHC [hockey] and BFC Dynamo [football], despite the increasingly divergent fan communities.

In the German popular imagination, a broad fear and fascination pertaining to the mythos of Dynamo persisted, whose continued life through sport merged tropes of East German authoritarianism and Nazi inspired right-wing extremism (Shoshan 2008). In the 70's and 80's, BFC Dynamo was the best team in East Germany, winning ten consecutive championships from 1979 to 1988 due in part to an extensive regime of match fixing and athlete doping (Dennis and Grix 2012, 154). Dynamo's competitive success in combination with dirty tactics constructed a mythos of amoral invincibility that has become engrained in the historical narrative of the club. FC Union, East Berlin's historically less successful but arguably more popular club, often defined themselves as political dissidents in relation to their institutional counterparts who came to represent the hypocrisy of a socialist regime that overtly disregarded a level playing field in football (McDougall 2014, 243). After the wall came down, BFC Dynamo fell into obscurity, languishing in the German fourth division. Frequented by only several thousand weekly attendees, a right-wing hooligan scene

developed as the team fell into competitive irrelevance, creating a collective that merged nostalgia for East Germany with white pride.

Early on in my fieldwork, I attended a BFC Dynamo football match with a friend. Normally accustomed to singing, we sat in the seats, too uncomfortable to participate. Heavily interspersed in the crowd were large built men covered in tattoos—some of them had Nazi symbols hidden in the illustrations. A banner hung along the fence bordering the pitch written in traditional font—COMMITTED TO TRADITION. Symbols act as an autoclave that informs atmosphere. East German flags and coded right-wing symbols lived side by side at the Friedrich Ludwig Jahn Sportpark. Nazi hooligan groups that still attended BFC had previously attended hockey as well in the 80's and the 90's, when the hockey and football facilities were adjacent to one another.

With a shared heritage, EHC and BFC were technically two entirely different organizations. Nonetheless, due to the overlapping fan scenes, this association of BFC Dynamo with Nazism spilled over into hockey as well. “When I had my first season ticket in the early 90's—there was massive right-wing hooligan scene at the Welli,” said Marco. “Every second game I got punched in the face or a kick in the ass. The people would yell at me or spit at me.”

“So they knew you were left-wing?” I asked.

“Yeah I couldn't really hide it much. I had a mohawk and looked like a little punk. I never wanted to change the way I looked to go to a hockey game, but then for a whole while I was going less and less to the games because of the attacks, so I was just losing the fun of it.” Growing up going to hockey games, Marco endured the extremist right-wing hooligans in the 90's. Marking a shift in the fan scene, a group called Red Star was founded before the

ultra movement that consolidated left-wing fans as a means of protecting themselves in the hostile sociopolitical environment at EHC Dynamo games. But the reputation lived up to the present day. “Everyone looks at the East and they think that this shit Stasi club still lives,” said Ecki, explaining how fans from other teams saw EHC Dynamo in the 90’s after the wall had fallen.

In the contemporary imaginary, Dynamo served as both a symbolic lynchpin of collective identification and a site of potential shame in its merging affiliation with Nazism and the Stasi. “We don’t have a history for the team from the Nazi era, but we still have to account for what happened in the holocaust and we have to account for what happened in the Stasi times, and that is a part of our work,” Jay asserted.

“I think that it’s important that people are aware of this history,” General added. “One has to understand that the system [the GDR] wasn’t as great as it was made out to be, and that has to be remembered. In my opinion, the history of Dynamo belongs to that and it shouldn’t disappear [from the fan culture] because it’s the soul of the club.”

“I understand this conscientious aspect that you mentioned,” Jay said to General during our interview. “But when you look around the stadium at the people wearing Dynamo, most of them are wankers.” For Black Corner, the identity of the club rested on a paradox that forced fans to directly confront Germany’s ghosts, in part because tradition and history were indispensable components of the fan culture. In this way, Dynamo bore the mark of both shame and distinction, creating a perpetual need to rectify the past through contemporary political action.

Fitting Antifa into Dynamo

Memories of Nazism continue to influence the contemporary German cultural imaginary to the extent that authoritarianism has become “somehow ethnotypically German,” implicating every German citizen in the moral collapse of the holocaust (Boyer 2006, 369). Due to the split of East and West Germany, scholars have argued that confrontations of national responsibility and collective admissions of guilt were delayed until the national project of reunification in 1989 (Hell 1997, Boyer 2006). While the East German state claimed itself as sole heirs to the antifascist resistance as a means of circumventing responsibility after the war (Hell 1997), other scholars have argued that cultural processes of working through trauma have been ongoing since the aftermath in less overt forms of mourning (Sprigge 2013, 2017). Ironically, the process of reforming the German nation towards normative liberal democratic ideals in line with Western Europe has engrained the specters of German authoritarianism into contemporary imaginings of the German political landscape (Shoshan 2016). Noting the ongoing burden of such hauntings, some acquaintances and interlocutors that I knew outside of Black Corner quietly expressed that perhaps it was time to relinquish themselves from the guilt of the holocaust. In sharp contrast to these softening political positions, fighting fascism was for Black Corner a moral imperative borne out of Germany’s traumas—it was the primary means of rectifying past events despite the impossibility of achieving any sort of historical resolution.

Antifascism influenced Black Corner’s vision for the fan scene and the ways that the group combated specters of German Nazism in the contemporary cultural landscape. In this way, Black Corner’s crowd support, street protest, and community engagement were different sides of the same coin—all enacting a vision of anti-discrimination, which staked a claim to public space that many non-ultras were uncomfortable with because they deemed

the subject matter to be too political. From the perspective of most members in Black Corner, fighting fascism wasn't an issue of politics, but rather of basic human decency [Menschlichkeit]. Pointing toward the socializing aspects of protest as a part of political activism (Juris 2014, Abe 2016), Antifa extends past any specific political ideology because it combines socialization with coordinated collective action. Applying broad matrices of anti-capitalist and anti-discriminatory logics, Antifa is applied locally as a concerted effort to live differently in one's local contexts. The social aspects of antifascist political action outside the context of hockey, I argue, were integral factors that impacted Black Corner's ideological solidarity and coordination in the arena.

Black Corner functioned much like a number of the other left-wing collectives in Berlin, utilizing direct democracy to make all decisions related to the group. This meant that Black Corner had no hierarchical structure of leadership—they were “horizontally” rather than “vertically” organized. Direct democracy rejects majority democracy, focusing instead on the process of making collective decisions that each individual in the group can live with (Graeber 2004, 89). Using this decision-making structure, the group met bi-weekly outside the arena to plan choreographies, design logos, and organize an annual antifa music festival during the summer. The group's activities extended into various types of community outreach, many of which were aimed at engaging with refugees. Black Corner received free Eisbären tickets in order to bring refugees to games, and further, on weekends took refugees ice skating. These *Aktionen* for many of the group members were more important than the atmosphere, meaning that many group meetings had more to do with various projects that they were running outside of the arena. As such, there was a dynamic tension between

individuals who prioritized the activist elements of group action while others were equally or more concerned with the state of the atmosphere in the arena.

“[But] the atmosphere is the core theme that binds us,” Matze emphasized. To underscore his point, Matze switches to English as we’re talking—

“It’s the daily work.”

Much like street protest, crowd support is the socializing element that binds the group, but further, it is also a performative medium used with the goal of normalizing Black Corner’s ideological vision for the fan scene at EHC Dynamo Berlin. By coordinating the affective disposition of the crowd, I argue that the ultras used participation to adjudicate discrepant visions of the fan scene and of Dynamo.

Adjudicating Visions of Dynamo

Crowd support at EHC Dynamo negotiated numerous political positions and visions of the collective imaginary within the parameters of crowd support in the arena. In this way, competing epistemologies of collective action are imperative for understanding the politics of participation as a form of public discourse. Necessitating “skills for adjudicating incommensurate visions” (Berlant 2011, 228), performative style in the arena is a product of spoken negotiation and refusal, noise and silence. As such, I argue that participation is an ongoing discursive process in which style and content is collectively negotiated over time. Participation entails the act of “putting your body on the line” (Juris 2014 via Reed 2005, 29), allowing participants to engage with, construct, [and contest] presentation of the collective imaginary in the arena. The stakes of such negotiations pertain to finding performative material that satisfies discrepant identities and ideologies of participants in the

fan curve. Affect proves to be an essential component of the discursive and relational process of participation—it is necessary for individuals and groups that have aspirations for influencing public efficacy (Mazzarella 2010, 298). In such contexts, William Mazzarella argues that coordinated action must be “affective to be effective” (ibid, 299).

The ultras did not necessarily choose songs that they preferred, but that would maximize participatory potential in the fan curve. In this way, the popularity and enthusiasm of the broader fan base often determines the duration of a song and how often it is chosen by the capos. In fact, Dynamo’s repertoire would have been quite different had the tastes and moods of the fan curve not been taken into account. Maximizing participation is thus prioritized over stylistic preference—though Black Corner and Fanatics Ost did not always agree on how to achieve peak involvement. As a result, participatory attunement was incredibly difficult to achieve as an ongoing process of negotiation between differing musical preferences, lyrical content, and the aesthetics of movement, all of which hinged on the identity politics of Dynamo and the epistemological motivations for performance.

Crowd Support as Political Action

In contrast to the larger fan base, crowd action became a way for Black Corner to engage with Dynamo’s historical and authoritarian stigmas by staking a claim to the arena as an antifascist space. The ongoing project for the group was to alter epistemologies of support in the fan scene toward a more politically and ethically reflexive form of participation.

“It’s a free decision to sing along or not,” said Matze during our interview. “But it’s also our job to motivate people to sing or through support to come into contact with us and win people over, so that they see things from our side” (Personal Interview 2017). In Berlin,

antifa proliferated through socialization that furthered the broad of ideals of anti-discrimination and anti-capitalism. More broadly, antifa is a communo-anarchist philosophy of political intervention marked by collective action aimed at winning public space and removing right-wing extremism from the public sphere. Street protest was just one site in which coordination, performance, shared experience, and degrees of ideological unity developed antifascist social scenes in Berlin. A number of youth clubs and squatted buildings in Berlin offer platforms for socialization, lectures, and musical performances on a nightly basis. Matze's band, MOFA, often played at one such left-wing youth organization called the *Bunte Kuh* [The Colorful Cow], a space with a lounge/bar area that hosted lectures on left-wing political issues, in addition to jam sessions and open mic nights. For the members of Black Corner, involvement in various Antifa social spaces around Berlin influenced the ultras' interpretation of the ethics and ideology of crowd action in the arena at EHC Dynamo.

"Why be in a group that has a political orientation?" I asked Marco. "Because you could do something else—you could be in Autonome [an antifascist-anarchist collective] or something."

"Who says I'm not," he said laughing. "You know me as this ultra from an *ultra* group, but it's not the only hobby I have, I'll tell you that much."

"So why be an ultra, then?"

"Because for me it's a perfect connection between my political interests that I stand up for and my love of hockey. [Within the group], we think mostly the same way, we can talk about everything and that for me seems like a perfect connection to watch hockey. It's a group of people and you've got everything from mild left-oriented to radicals—you get anarchists and you get antifascists, but it's a great bunch of people and it doesn't matter how big the political differences are—we all stick together. When a big revolution comes, afterward we can talk about the details, but right now we have the same goal!" he said, laughing (Personal Interview 2017).

Group action in the arena was united by the overarching philosophy that politics are inseparable from the ways that members of Black Corner live outside the context of sports. Seeing the fan base as a microcosm of society meant intervening when members of the fan scene engaged in perceived acts of discriminatory practice.

If Antifa was a fluid social and political movement “made and remade continually...not through a fixed structure, virtual networks, or institutions but through living social relationships” (Khasnabish 2013, 83), then Black Corner was one such organized collective, constituted by action that drew upon antifa as a form of political ideology and public intervention. Relying upon a cohesive visual aesthetic and embodied style that communicated a clear subcultural [punks and ultras] and ideological orientation [antifa/left-wing], Black Corner merged crowd support with a collectively politicized presence. “We do these political actions with the banners and the flags, standing up for a political side,” said Marco. “That’s what I like the most, that there’s someone who keeps up a flag and says there are things we don’t like and things that aren’t OK, and we stand up for it” (Personal Interview 2017). In this way, collective action amounted to acts of everyday activism in and around the arena with the goal of shifting the outlook of the broader fan scene at EHC Dynamo Berlin, and if not that, then staking a claim to public space, all of which served as a way of “learning to live with ghosts” (Shoshan 2014 via Derrida 1994, xvii) in the German context.

Black Corner’s strategies were aimed at reclaiming public spaces through the elimination of overt right-wing social organization and public expressivity. “When you’re in an *ultra* group you can influence the politics in the arena,” said Dima, articulating the group’s collective philosophy. “Rosa Luxemburg said once, ‘to be apolitical means being

political without realizing it’, and I think that’s a smart sentence because there isn’t anything that’s not political” (Personal Interview 2017). From this perspective, crowd support was viewed within a broader realm of a) political intervention and b) social impact, geared toward shifting the political subjectivities of its participants and winning participatory consent for more political content in the arena.

“This is basically a question asking why I’m a political person—it’s the same reason why I go to demonstrations, it’s the same reason why I join protests, because I think that there’s a majority of people in this country that don’t want to see [the problems] or are looking in the wrong direction,” Marco said. “So we have to try to get people to see what’s happening and that’s the whole reason why you live a political life anyway, because you want to try to change things and you have to try and convince people for that. One hundred Antifas are not going to change a city, but they can make people look at the problems.” (Personal Interview 2017)

Black Corner harnessed atmosphere with a similar political purpose to protest—that which displayed an ethical position aimed at influencing awareness to social issues in the fan curve. *Ultra* and *antifa*, then, were mutually reinforcing tenets that oriented group social life and directed crowd action. As it pertained to support in the arena, the *ultra* style became an affective form of public address that also acted as a utility aimed at recalibrating epistemologies of crowd support. In this vein, Black Corner operated in the arena in a strategic tension between discourse with the broader fan base and an impetus to repress behavior that could qualify as right-wing extremism. “You will [still] have Nazis in the block, but you don’t see them and you don’t hear them,” Ecki said. “And I would also like to say that that’s OK with me. I don’t see them, I don’t hear them, that’s enough for me” (Personal Interview 2017).

Keeping Fascism at Bay

Marco and Ecki's mindsets toward performance emphasize a dual role of asserting a collective *presence* in the arena with the capability of keeping right-wing extremism *out*. While Dima argued that its potential to awaken onlookers to problems in the world that are going on around them. But this proactive mentality is also a defensive social mechanism aimed at preempting dark potentialities just over the horizon. "*What if we didn't intervene?*"—a fear that racism is a slippery slope—also motivates action based in historical specters of fascism and authoritarianism. This mindset emplaces Black Corner (and antifa more generally) as actors within the contemporary social imaginary pushing the public sphere away from the ever-burgeoning brink of fascist reawakening.

Ecki expressed a fear about the growth and exacerbation of preexisting racism. "It's a little step in the right direction when you stamp out these everyday acts of racism," he said. "Then you've really won a lot of ground. The gap between everyday racism and [right-wing political parties like] the AFD or the NPD is really small. I believe that we draw attention in large part because we're pretty approachable. We don't want to manipulate people, but we can talk sense into the older ones. We can say, 'what you just said is total shit—think about it, what you just said was pretty racist, right?'" (Personal Interview 2017)

"So you can talk with them?" I asked.

"Most of them," he said. "That's the reason why I think politics are an important part of the curve. And because it's also a public representation of the club." Black Corner's strategies toward discrimination approached right-wing extremism like a virus—something to be eliminated through various methods of treatment, be it through discursive engagement, claiming performative presence, or repressing overt expressions of racist sentiment. From this viewpoint, racism haunts because it is a direct and ongoing manifestation of Nazism.

Layers of stigma around crowds, hardcore sports fans, and the mythos of Dynamo make ice hockey games a space of reanimation—it's a haunted space. Hauntings necessitate “a something-to-be-done” (Gordon 2008). In this context, antifascist action is not only the ethical thing to do, but further, is deemed a *necessity* to fend off the impending tide of fascism.

Irony and Refusal

However, many within the broader fan scene were not convinced that the social environment suffered from issues of discrimination or needed improvement. As a result, performance became a site of conflict in which histories, identities, and style came under intense scrutiny and debate. Fanatics Ost vehemently avoided issues deemed “political” and was becoming increasingly wary of Black Corner's incorporation of left-wing political philosophy into the fan block. Showing increasingly overt resistance to Black Corner's politicized approach, Black Corner began to comment that Fanatics Ost—which had been founded by left-leaning Dynamo fans—had become increasingly conservative as old members began attending less and newer members joined. As tension increased and the divide between the groups widened, I became entrenched in the conflict, privy only to one perspective. I was firmly planted in Black Corner's camp, which had ceased any socialization or discourse outside of the arena (aside from several verbal confrontations between groups that almost came to blows). The groups still lead chants together in the arena, but Fanatics Ost completely disengaged from social issues that could be polarizing for the fan base. This position was quite common in most fan scenes as most fans feared that taking an overt political stance risked tearing the fan scene apart. Resultantly, Black Corner and Fanatics Ost

were united in a shared interest to harness atmosphere as a form of support, but had divergent and incommensurable philosophies around the social and political goals of crowd action in the arena.

Specifically, Black Corner discussed particular songs in the repertoire at their meetings and abstained at games from those that they decided had racist, sexist, or homophobic connotations. During EHC Dynamo's seven game series against Adler Mannheim in the playoffs, we heard "*Adler Mannheim, Hurensöhne!!*" being led by Fanatics Ost. Black Corner stayed silent, often watching until the song ended, starting to sing only as the song was phased out for another.

"These insults under the belt don't need to be a part of the repertoire," Ecki exclaimed. "It's unacceptable. These words from childhood like 'you cunt' or 'you whore'—I don't say that anymore. I try to control myself. Jay's grandmother said to me once—'are you an animal using that insult?'" (Personal Interview 2017) The ethics of action undergird the collective decision-making of Black Corner, who protested certain songs in the arena and aimed to influence other fans' opinions and decision-making regarding the content of songs by dampening their emotive impact. "The people that still sing will notice that fewer and fewer people sing," Ecki said. "Earlier maybe it lasted the whole period, now maybe it lasts three minutes. And eventually two minutes and then the twenty people who start the song realize that only twenty people sound really weak."

With polarizing effects in the curve, the social impact from Black Corner's politically guided form of crowd support was tangible. Over the years in the Dynamo fan scene, Dima slowly found himself relating more to Black Corner's style of support than he did with Fanatics Ost.

“I know that can work because it did with me,” he said in regards to the role of refusal (Personal Interview 2017). “I used to sing [the Adler Mannheim song] as well. I didn’t think about [white] supremacy and I never had a problem with homosexuality, but still sang along because I never thought about what it meant. And then when I stood with Black Corner I realized what I was actually doing. And I believe it can work that way for everyone. When you’re in an *ultra* group, you can influence the politics in the arena [*besser Politik machen können*].” Engaged in ongoing discourse over the rhetorical semantics of the block, Black Corner and Fanatics Ost offered competing ideological and ethical perspectives from their opposite ends of the terrace—all the while attempting to coordinate unified performance. In this way, the social and expressive role of the fan curve was unstable, resting on discrepant epistemologies of support.

This was made evident past anyone’s wildest expectations during a game in the fall, when Black Corner made a choreography in tandem with the club’s alliance with the Coalition Against Homophobia [Bundnis Gegen Homophobie]. The group had been designing and constructing a crowd cover that blended Black Corner’s logo with a rainbow flag, which would envelop the entire fan curve in conjunction with a banner that would extend the length of the plexiglass behind the net. With silhouettes of two men and two women in an embrace on the banner, the message between them read—LOVE IS LOVE. I went home late at night after working on the choreo as many in the group kept working so that it would be ready for the match the next day. But it was only minutes before the game that we found out Fanatics Ost would be protesting the choreo, waiting outside until the *Aktion* was over. We read about FO’s protest on their web page, which Matze grumbled, was riddled with typos—

Part of our community is utilizing the fan curve more and more as a utility to project [Projektionsfläche] their own [political] interests. One must ask the question, whether the club and the team are the main focus, or their own interests. We also don't tolerate racist or homophobic acts of any kind. Historically, there haven't been any known homophobic attacks [in the arena].

Choreographies require the consent and participation of the entire block to maximize their evocative impact. Bodies and hands must lift the banners up uniformly across the entire block to be seen well, leaving Black Corner to fill the void normally occupied by FO. Needing to act and adapt, the group and myself fulfilled our roles in order to achieve the best possible outcome. The *Aktion* went off as planned, except one couldn't help but notice in the photos that the banner in the left-hand corner couldn't be raised properly, sinking downward in the spot where FO should have been. The crowd cover was taken down after several minutes and we all made our way back to our area of the block. Fanatics Ost returned and began leading chants, but for the first and only time that I was with Black Corner, no one sang. We could only stare. I was completely depleted—in shock. General told us that we had done a great job and that the *Aktion* had gone well, but this was hardly comforting to anyone at the time. The atmosphere was dead and the mood around me was grim.

What members within FO saw as an ideological misappropriation of the block led to a collective act of refusal. With a strong influence in the fan curve, FO brought a sizeable number of people outside the stadium with them. This not only dampened the outcome of the choreography, but led to the complete dissolution of dialogue between the two *ultra* groups outside the arena. Meanwhile, the capos from each group continued to coordinate crowd atmosphere in the block throughout the rest of the season. Fundamental to the rift was not only divergent views regarding the purpose of the fan curve as an expressive device, but also

the moral and ideological impetuses that motivated participation and collective coordination in the first place.

“It was a break in the curve in that moment and it was really fucked up. FO don’t see it that way, but it was a statement. If you leave the arena [instead of participating], that’s a pretty strong statement about not getting along with this message. And that’s why I think it proved why it’s important to do this,” he said laughing. “[Their protest] was a strong statement. Leaving the arena—it was a statement against. If the rainbow banner drops and you say, ‘no I don’t want to have anything to do with that’, it’s a statement against” (Personal Interview 2017).

After the game, we stood in the cold next to the train tracks under the heavily trafficked Warschauerstraße. Part of the disbelief stemmed from how mainstream the sentiment should have been. “It’s not a political issue,” Marco reiterated. “It’s an issue of humanity [Menschlichkeit].”

For Black Corner, *Aktionen* were strategized in line with the group’s assessment of the broader community’s social and political development over time (i.e. Is the fan curve ready for such a choreography?). Black Corner’s collective action took marked steps toward increasingly overt political statements as they assessed the fans’ willingness to engage. The political aspects of Black Corner’s style of crowd action operated in tension with the community’s sense of what was appropriate in the fan curve. General spoke about taking baby steps in the direction of the political. As such, the mindset of collective action was geared toward spurring progress that widened the parameters of social and political discourse in the arena. Black Corner inhabited a philosophy toward *Aktionen* in which *presence and participation* transformed new subjectivities out of the old—albeit in ways that often proved to be out of their control.

But refusal was a powerful tactic in which to challenge particular visions for the fan scene. Altering the emotional impact of the atmosphere in the block and overall song choice, collective protest had potential to disrupt coordinated activity in the block and completely derail the ultras' intended affective and emotional trajectory in the arena. In this way, collective protest references and contests the ideology undergirding performance. The act is a discursive one. Refusal performs absence, in effect, creating the virtual referent to what was once there. The vacancy displayed by silence revealed the affective power of Fanatics Ost to create and to deplete atmosphere—and as a result, to influence action and belief—though not always in ways that convinced or unified the fan scene. Refusal, then, directs attention to an issue while impressing ideological force upon those participating through a jagged affective and emotive depletion in the stadium space. At these performative junctures, silence is more powerful than noise.

Conclusions

Through this case study of Black Corner Ultras and EHC Dynamo Berlin, I have shown how crowd participation acts as a rhetorical device that adjudicates collective imaginaries and epistemologies of crowd action in the context of sports fandom. Crowd action works outside of the textual and rational-critical discourse meant to characterize the democratic public sphere (Habermas 1962). I am arguing that participatory performance is the nexus point in which multiple interpretations of community and history are negotiated and coordinated into collective forms of embodied expression. Contingent upon the negotiation of differing ethics of action in public space, refusal acts as a powerful tactic of performative rupture in which to challenge particular visions of the fan scene and the

historical narratives around Dynamo. In this way, assembly “both binds and differentiates” (Butler 2015, 77). Participation is used to adjudicate discrepant visions of the fan scene and of Dynamo. For the ultras, this is the daily work.

But for Black Corner, the daily work had a second goal oriented toward shifting the epistemologies of support in the arena. For antifascist groups like Black Corner, Germany’s history was not relegated to the past, but instead continued to occupy the present. As a result, Dynamo was a totem that encapsulated the club’s pedigree of competitive success while simultaneously bearing an ongoing stigma, which merged East German authoritarianism with Nazism as specters branded upon the collective imaginary. As a result, Black Corner was ethically compelled to incorporate antifascist logics in the arena, making crowd support a political action aimed at “accounting for the past” (Jay, Personal Interview 2017). Fanatics Ost, on the other hand, surgically removed these specters from their presentation of Dynamo, imagining a more nostalgic version of *Berlin Ost*, based on the conviction that politics didn’t have a place in the curve. Through performative support, Black Corner aimed to win public space through the elimination of any overtly discriminatory practices and further, to alter the epistemological dispositions of the larger fan base toward their mentality of crowd support. In cyclical and reinforcing fashion, opposition fans continued to exhume Dynamo’s past—

“When the guest block called out ‘Sheiß Dynamo!’ we did it too!” Ecki said laughing. “We thought, yeah OK that’s funny...Sheiß Dynamo! We’re the shame of the whole league! So we sang along and we sang it with pride.”

Interlude: On Violence

Founded within a sporting community that had a preexisting history of organized fighting, the ultras at Shamrock Rovers FC stood close to the individuals who called themselves Casuals—they organized fights outside of matchday. They often helped with the ultras' choreographies, and we sang the same songs together on Block M, many of which revolved around stories of fighting from the old days in the 70's and 80's.

*“We are Shamrock Rovers we're Ireland's number one,
And when we see the Bohs they always fucking run,
We chase them round Doyle's corner and into Phibsborough too
And if we ever catch them we'll beat them black and blue.”*

The songs about Bohemians FC performed a historical narrative, reconstructing a rivalry based in part upon violent encounters from the past.

“Apparently a few decades ago people would just run up to the [opponent's] end, and the whole thing was to try and take the end of the other fans and kick them out of their stand,” Fiachra said. “So that was going on during the game, the whole stands fighting each other, just mass brawls” (Personal Interview 2012).

“So you feel like the rivalry is connected by the violence between the opposition support?” I asked.

“Yeah, definitely. Even though most people wouldn't take any part of it we all still sing about it.”

Good atmosphere brims with threat, where possibilities expand and outcome become unpredictable. “If you go looking around for a fight after a Bohs game you're guaranteed at least one,” said Davy (Personal Interview 2012). “It's something that yeah, I do thrive on it,

but I don't agree with it. But as much as I don't like it, I would not change it for the world because it's one of those feelings where it's part of being a fan of a club, hating someone to the point where you don't see them as human." This feeling is acquired through means other than physical confrontation. Risk and threat elevate the atmosphere on gameday. Expanding the range of possibilities—in essence, bringing atmosphere to the brink of physical violence—pushes future outcomes closer towards the present. Atmosphere is at its best when the unlikely teeters on the brink of actualization.

* * *

It's 2017—we are leaving Dalymount Park in high spirits after Rovers have just humiliated Bohemians 4-0. The police made us wait for the Bohs supporters to leave in order to eliminate clashes between supporters in the streets. Once released, we began walking in the direction of O'Connell Street in order to cross back to the south side of the city. The streets were dim, empty, and silent—covered only in the pale glow of the streetlights. None of us know the north side of Dublin very well and we are trying to figure out the best way to return to O'Connell street where we will be safe from attack. From behind us we began to hear the taunts of a group of Bohs supporters that had found us. Tailing us a block away they followed us, calling us back to them. The debate came to a breaking point when half the group felt that they could no longer shrug off the calls of the Bohemians supporters. But Karl protested.

"This is not what we do!" trying to pull everyone onwards, away from the situation. Some agreed with Karl, but for others there was a begrudging obligation to confront the calls to fight.

“If you’re not going to stand up for your group and be prepared to fight, then you’re not an ultra—whether you enjoy it or not,” I was told later. A public bus pulled up and Karl jumped at the perfect opportunity to evade the impending conflict, urging everyone to come with him. Some followed, while the remainder walked back towards the handful of Bohemians supporters. The ultras had split in half. For some, fighting exemplified the group’s willingness to work together through adverse circumstances—to put one’s body on the line for one another. Fighting was representative of the group’s unity in decisive moments that challenged cohesion. In this case, action was rooted in a collective responsibility to one another. For the others, it played no role in their definition of ultra at all.

** * **

At the bar with Sal in Münster, we talk about what had happened. He hadn’t been able to fly over for the match.

“Why is there an association with ultras and danger and violence when the primary impetus of being an ultra is to support your club by creating atmosphere? Why is there a public perception of ultras as—“

Sal cuts me off.

“—because they are violent. So as much as it’s not the biggest part of the whole scene, it’s there. You can’t deny that. So why is there a connection between the two? Because the connection exists. But is it overstated and blown out of proportion? Absolutely.”

Part 2 – Public Rupture

Shamrock Rovers FC

Atmosphere is something that can be cultivated, modulated even. Always in a state of becoming, it is an experiential realm of participation that constitutes subjectivity-in-the-making.

*I'm just sayin' you might get tired of the wet weeks,
The wet socks, the wet jeans, the wet funerals, the wet streets.
It's all getting a little harder to justify.
And it's too late to be screaming 'we are your friends'
At a gaf you've never been before, and you'll never be again.
Sydney and London swallow up your mates...
-- 'Any craic?'
No. You all fucked off.*

-Just Saying

3 – Becoming *ultra*

As a graduate student having just completed my first year, I was immediately thrown head first into a series of emotional events when I began my field research in Dublin with Shamrock Rovers Ultras. After a disappointing 0-0 draw in Monaghan (a team that would later fold mid-season due to financial difficulties), the conversations amongst the group had little to do with the result on the pitch. Joe, one of the founding members of the SRFC Ultras had just passed away. Having just undergone chemotherapy, I was told he died of an infection, so just like that he was gone. Leading two lives in which the regular rarely intertwined with *ultra*, his family was shocked when a mass of Shamrock Rovers supporters showed up to his funeral. The wake happened only several days after I arrived, but he was a constantly mentioned and referred to during my time in Dublin with the SRFC Ultras. As I became more involved, Joe's name came up when the younger ultras talked about how the way things were and how the fan scene had changed. His presence seemed to touch many aspects of the way the fans organized to support Shamrock Rovers.

I learned this over time as I took the bus with the ultras and began participating in their activities in and outside of the stadium. Karl thought I was a confused tourist the first time we met, but after hearing I was a researcher interested in ultras—one that wanted to travel with them to all the games—I was put to work. Several days after our first game together, I met up with Karl outside of Leo Burdock's, the fish and chip place in The Liberties where we lived, and we took the commuter rail to Dalkey to work on the upcoming display for Joe. Karl was wearing the same faded, green jacket that he wore everyday with his green Adidas sneakers—the same colors as Shamrock Rovers. Hopping off the commuter rail, we walked to a hangar next to a football field. The older lads were already there—they

had come out of retirement for Joe's display. As we walked into the den, Albert, with a black t-shirt and a long graying ponytail, was sewing black flags together on the sewing machine. Forkie had designed the banner for Joe, and was busy dividing the image into a grid, which was an image of Joe's face, smiling. The younger guys were tasked with painting the banner that would hang underneath. For the younger generation of ultras in the group and newcomers like me, Joe was one of the creators of the whole Ultras scene in Ireland. "He was a 'can do' merchant," Keith told me later. "We had nobody to ask advice, nobody to show us the way or lead us. We did everything from scratch and made it up as we went along."

Arriving in Tallaght on the day of the match, I ran into Sal, who was a skinny college kid at the time, standing outside the Maldron with Paulie a couple of hours before the match against Cork. Paulie looks relatively unassuming. He is quiet. Underneath his coat, tattoos run up and down his arms—a hooded ultra on his right arm holds a lit flare, his face darkened in shadows. *We'll Never Die* is displayed prominently underneath the figure. It is the song sung at the most critical of moments at Shamrock Rovers, when disappointment is high and hope is low—when all is lost. Transcendence is referenced on his body, an allusion to the club's financial difficulties ten years before and the ways the ultras changed the atmosphere in the block at a time when going to matches every week made your heart sink. Losses on the pitch coincided with an existential uncertainty—not knowing if the team would be playing in a year. We met up with the rest of the group inside, swallowed our drinks, and headed into the stadium to set up the choreo. Flags were set up and crowd covers positioned so that they could be lifted and unfurled at a moment's notice. But when the ultras went back to their allocated locker in the stadium, the flares they had planned to use during the match had

disappeared. Panic ensued, and several of the ultras proposed protesting the match altogether. We found out later that someone from the club administration had gone in and taken them away—the team is fined for use of pyrotechnics in the stadium. But as kickoff neared, one of the older members sprung into action, smuggling his own stash into the ground. Now we had to wait for the rest of the fans to enter the stadium.

Nearing kickoff, the players walked out onto the field and lined up at the midfield circle, the announcer came on over the loudspeaker.

“Last week someone passed along—Mr. Joe Merriman.” His voice echoed around the stadium as the supporters stood in silence. “Joe the Hoop as he was affectionately known was at the heart and soul of this club, Shamrock Rovers. He was a member, a volunteer, a trustee at the Rovers Heritage Trust, and a family member of our very own Ultras. This club will be a lesser place without him around and he will be deeply missed by all. *Tonight we take solace in his vision of the ultras.*”

The entire stadium stood and clapped for Joe for a minute, but I was nervous as hell—scared that something might go wrong. I recalled what I had heard so many times in the previous week.

*This has to be perfect.
This isn't just any display.
This is for Joe.*

Keith pulled the tab at the bottom of the flare and a flame burst out of the top, igniting Joe's old spot in the terrace with a red-hot light. Six black flags were raised from behind the barrier on the sideline of the East Stand, hanging still in the air. He stood confidently, his arm raised, eyes towards the sky with a smile on his face. The banner we painted last night hung on the

barrier, raised a few rows under Keith. The SRFC Ultras' Italian contacts, ultras themselves at AS Roma, helped them translate the sign into Italian: CIAO JOE—SARAI SEMPRE CON NOI.

Goodbye, Joe. You'll always be with us.

Smoke began collecting under the roof of the East Stand, billowing out onto the pitch. In the haze, the referee blew his whistle to start the game and the players burst into action.

Mick's rhythm on the drum signaled the first chant. The word "HOOPS"—the team's nickname—echoed from the East Stand to the rhythm of the drum. The black flags went down and the colored tifosi shot up in front of Joe's banner, filling the section with colorful stripes and shamrocks. More flares ignited as the crowd covers rose along Block L and N. With a burn time of only sixty seconds, they seem to last much longer—time stretches in the moment. The Ultras and the rest in block M shouted "HOOPS!" in unison, which transitioned into a wordless song with a Latin rhythm, Dale Kavase. It was a fitting song—a celebration. Liam and I held the crowd cover for ten seconds and ran it back down, eager to join everyone at Block M. Smoke trapped under the roof was stained red from flares as the crowd jumped to the swift beat of the drum. I caught a glimpse of Keith as I ran up. He held his flare out, smiling, as the flame died to glowing embers and he dropped it on the ground.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the precarity and perceived marginalization of Shamrock Rovers' most hardcore fans, and the subjectivities that have developed in tandem with the collective experiences of the fan community that have been largely defined by narratives of

suffering and survival. This situational specificity that I will continue to expand upon pertains to the ways in which the globalization of capital has created increasingly commonplace experiences of precariousness as it relates to the sustainability of community and social life (Berlant 2011, Lorey 2015, Butler 2015). This precarity was instigated by the club's previous owner, Louis Kilcoyne, who sold the stadium at Milltown to housing developers. The stadium was subsequently torn down in the 1970's and forced the club into decades of homelessness that severely impacted the team's financial wellbeing. The club was constantly on the financial brink, which correlated with poor performances on the pitch and negatively impacted the team's results. These factors made going to Shamrock Rovers matches closer to self-punishment rather than a relaxing or enjoyable leisure activity. Over the years, this ongoing experience became a defining source of trauma that was woven into the historical narrative of the club and passed down to the younger generation of fans.

In consideration of such traumas, this chapter examines the founding of the SRFC Ultras in 2002 and the subsequent change in atmosphere impacted by the group's performative activities in the stadium. The group's initial impact was significant at a time when the club was struggling through financial problems that threatened to wipe the team out of existence. The ultras' role in stimulating atmosphere on the terraces was one such factor that both diverted attention away from the grim results on and off the pitch, recreating through performance the intimacy of place and community that was stripped away in its physical form. I argue that the ultras' appropriation of the *ultra* style of crowd support in the terrace helped to create emotive alternatives to the negative atmosphere surrounding the club's finances and competitive results. Collective expression was conducted by "transforming affect" (Gray 2013, 2) and further, used as a rhetorical device in which to

navigate and transcend complex situations of which the circumstances or outcome were already decided—like the bankruptcy of a football club or the death of Joe Merriman.

As a result of this selective adoption and adaption of style and ideology, the SRFC Ultras saw themselves as a part of a global movement that articulated itself in the stadium and circulated online through various YouTube channels, online forums, and Facebook pages. The appropriation of the *ultra* style and its ethos of crowd support instigated a turn away from British football fan culture, which previously dominated the style and ethos of fan support at Shamrock Rovers. Because most Irish football fans supported British clubs, identifying as ultras marked a shift that alienated its members from mainstream football fandom and popular culture. The SRFC Ultras often traveled and looked online, adapting the aesthetics and ideologies of *ultra* in ways that interacted with the salient aspects of the club's narrative, while simultaneously redirecting the group members' day-to-day experiences and subjectivities toward transnational planes of engagement.

At the start, the ultras made this stylistic change by bringing pyrotechnics into the arena and making choreographies at the beginning of matches. And while the prior songs at Shamrock Rovers had been taken mostly from British football clubs, the second generation of ultras at Shamrock Rovers began taking songs from Italy and Argentina that were longer and more continuous—songs which kept the atmosphere high for the entire match. The new style, which incorporated Latin rhythms, gave the stadium an upbeat groove, creating a distinctive collective experience that drew stylistic inspiration from many *ultra* groups around the world. By the time I arrived in 2012, Shamrock Rovers had relocated to Tallaght Stadium and were financially stable. In these contemporary circumstances, identifying as *ultra* became a way to authenticate locality while underscoring the emotive salience of

homelessness as a defining feature of the collective imaginary at the club. Through the selective appropriation of the *ultra* style, I argue that crowd action roots in its participants an intimate connection to place while developing globalized subjects in which interconnection across difference is key to transnational belonging.

The Collective Impact of Precarity

My arrival in Dublin in 2012 coincided with the death of Joe Merriman, one of the forefathers of *ultra* in Ireland. His sudden departure revealed the significance of his impact upon the supporters at Shamrock Rovers and the older generation of ultras who together imagined and implemented a type of collective action that no one had seen before in Ireland. I found myself most often with the younger members—the second generation that was now in charge of the day-to-day group decisions. Recently, the older members, now with wives and families, had decided to hand over the reins to the younger members. When I arrived at the bus for my first away match against Monaghan United, it was Karl who I first spoke with who—incredulous that an American had shown up out of nowhere. Karl sized me up and sold me to the rest of the group. While some members were more open to getting to know me than others, Karl's support was key to my acceptance. This was the beginning of an ongoing relationship in which my life criss-crossed with a number of the members of the SRFC Ultras, even after my formalized block of field research ended in the summer of 2012. Years later, Karl and Davy would sit in my apartment and watch YouTube videos of Ultras Eintracht Frankfurt and Green Boys Casablanca, and they would come to my new field site, FC Union Berlin in Köpenick. I would also return to Dublin for the infamous Dublin Derby between Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians FC at Dalymount Park. I had watched the group

develop as certain members stepped away and others joined. This chapter focuses on Karl, Fiachra, Davy, and Sal—all young men who had recently been handed the creative reins of the group in 2012. I also rely on Paul and Eoghan to tell me their experiences with the club and the ultras in the early 2000's as the fan scene at Shamrock Rovers was rapidly changing.

Collective memory, and as a result Joe's impact on the group, was an integral component of the SRFC Ultras' contemporary existence and their performance in the terrace. Essential to the survival of Shamrock Rovers, Joe was a founding member of the SRFC Ultras during a time of collective trauma borne out of the club's homelessness and financial precarity. At times of competitive underperformance, the ultras played a critical role in the survival of the fan base through their creation of atmospheric spectacles, attracting new participants even as the team continued to lose each week. Years later when I continued to probe for information about performative and ideological changes on the terraces, Sal told me, "The best person to ask would have been Joe" (Personal Correspondence, 2017). Joe Merriman and the ultras became part of the club's story of survival in addition to its transmission to newer generations of fans. The narrative trajectory of historical success, to placelessness, to present-day financial stability that the club's new stadium helped to establish was remembered and relived on the terrace every week through the songs that the ultras sang.

A defining feature of the social life at Shamrock Rovers, then, was the experiential interrelationship between memory and trauma, which was derived from stories of the decades-long existential threat to the club and the absence of a home ground for the fans or the club. Performance studies and trauma studies scholars have argued that historical events are mediated in ways that often make traumatic experience collective rather than solely

individual (Kaplan 2005), making trauma a defining factor of cultural life. Drawing upon the ways that performative practice transmits memory and knowledge as forms of embodied experience (Taylor 2003), performance studies scholars have argued that bearing witness to traumatic events can act as a process in which memories are culturally reproduced across generations (Hirsch 2008, Cizmic 2012), conjuring experiences in which the original moment is experienced by participants as something new (Treziase and Wake 2013, Wake 2013, 35). Creating an experiential realm of historical reimagining on the terrace, the ultras demonstrated not only a need to remember the club's painful history, but also *to feel* the community's vulnerability as a means toward understanding the salience of its perseverance—*We'll never die, we'll never die, we'll keep the green flag flying high!*

Debt and Homelessness

Founded in 1901, Shamrock Rovers FC is the most decorated club across Ireland (and as a result, the most hated), which made history and tradition key to experiencing the salience and depth of the contemporary fan base. The club's old home ground, despite the team's departure in 1987, was still a central theme of remembrance. Having played at Glenmalure Park on Milltown Road in Ringsend for over sixty years, the club's owner, Louis Kilcoyne, sold the ground to property developers without any notice to the fans. The strategic shift was due in part to the commercial fallout of a shifting popularity from the domestic league toward English football that had begun as early as the 1960's (Whelan 2006). Shamrock Rovers encountered their greatest on field successes and tragedies in the same four years in the 1980's outside the mainstream attention of Irish football enthusiasts who were already beginning to follow English clubs on television. Having just won four league titles in a row

from 1983-88, Kilcoyne who was transparent in his ownership of the club for business purposes, sold the club at the team's competitive zenith, citing a continuous decline in attendance as the primary reason for selling the club (Rice 2005, 200). The decision and his subsequent departure left the team without a home ground and put them in debt to the amount of approximately three million Euros (Rice 2005, 183). The administration was forced to rent out other stadiums from year-to-year in different locations across the city, putting the club in a highly precarious financial position from which it took decades to recover. A shimmering and reverberant memory, the salience of home was recounted in song:

*Oh, the lads, you'll never see us coming,
Fastest team in the land.
All the lads and lassies, smiles upon their faces,
Going down to Milltown Road to see McLaughlins aces.*

Milltown Road seemed almost utopian in its retelling in 2012. I was told it was one of the best pitches in Ireland, with a beautiful terrace that made it one of the iconic grounds of the league before it was torn down. Glossy photos of Glenmalure Park surfaced and resurfaced in books and on social media, as if it were only yesterday that there had been a packed standing terrace full of twenty thousand spectators. Eoghan, who was close to the ultras, published an oral history of the club, which painted a visceral attachment to Milltown Road and the trauma associated with the sudden loss.

"I dug up a bit of the pitch, as many people were doing, and stuck it in a crisp bag," said Macdara Ferris in an interview with Eoghan. "I kept it in a Chinese takeaway dish for around three years... Unfortunately, one day I dropped something and it hit the shelf that I kept the grass on and a part of Glenmalure Park flew across the room and fell into countless little bits. I tried putting it back together but it was gone."

Demolished and transformed into apartments, a small plaque now rests at the entrance to the development where the stadium used to be. This narrative, and the feeling it evoked was handed down to the ultras—many of which would not yet have been born when Milltown was sold by Louis Kilcoyne in 1987.

Nicknamed “Ireland’s nomads” by gleeful rivals who had been previously overshadowed by Rovers’ dominance, the club in the meantime adopted a policy of aggressive spending on players in the hopes that the eventual building of a stadium would return the on-field investment (Rice 2005, 183). As early as 1996, there was promise of a stadium being built in the neighborhood of Tallaght, which did not materialize. As a result, the strategy—a risky maneuver—did not translate to on-field success and subsequently buried the club even further in debt. Talks with potential investors were beacons of hope for fans who prayed for financial stability and a return to competitive success. On the terrace, *Build Me Up Buttercup* became a salient reminder of the grim desperation that hung in the air—

*Why do you build me up buttercup baby
Just to let me down and mess me around.
And worst of all, you never call baby
When you say you will, but I love you still!*

Time and again negotiations fell through as the quality of play on the pitch sunk to new lows. In 2005, Shamrock Rovers were relegated to the lower division—a humiliating prospect for the league’s most successful club. With all talks with potential investors having fallen through, the fans made a last-ditch effort to save the club, forming The 400 Club, which bought Shamrock Rovers and restructured the club into a democratically organized, fan-owned entity (Rice 2005, 189).

Despite winning the Second Division and earning promotion to the Premier Division in 2006, the financial struggle continued. In college at the time, Eoghan was giving all his money to Rovers. “You could pay for a year membership or a five-year membership or ten-year membership,” said Eoghan. “And the five-year membership was 2.5 grand, so I went up to the bank at Donnybrook and there was almost exactly 2.5 grand [in my account]. I remember [the banker] looked at me and was like ‘oh have you given up the faith?’ And I remember thinking, where the fuck do you think the check’s going? A lot of people did that.” In 2008, a stadium was finally built in Tallaght that contributed to the club’s financial security. Several years later, Shamrock Rovers won the league two years in a row, marking an end to the hardship and trauma.

Finding Home in Tallaght

The first time I visited Tallaght Stadium, it was deserted and empty. I had made the trip to the last stop of the Dublin metro the day before my first ever match because I wanted to make sure I could get to the ground without getting lost the next day. The stadium was shiny and new, albeit unbelievably small in comparison to the giant stadiums I had visited in London as a tourist. Tallaght Stadium, in contrast, held a maximum of 6,000 people and usually attracted two or three thousand spectators to home matches. Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United, in contrast, holds almost 75,000. This comparison can begin to give the outsider a conception of the League of Ireland’s (un)popularity. Despite its modest size, Tallaght Stadium in its small-time, all-seater, and well-maintained respectability was by far the nicest ground in the League of Ireland. Most football stadiums in Dublin are concrete monoliths, dilapidated and neglected. Grimy and tucked away in various neighborhoods

throughout Dublin, they are frequented by only a sliver of the city's inhabitants. Tallaght Stadium has one of the league's best attendance records, bringing in around two to three thousand supporters to home matches on Friday nights. That is not to say that Ireland isn't interested in football. A pervasive chip on the shoulder of the Shamrock Rovers supporters was that most people would rather watch the world-class English Premiership on Sky Sports at the pub across the street than stand on the terrace and support their local club. I had done just that with my Irish roommate when I studied in Galway several years before during my time as an undergraduate, even though we were a five-minute walk from the home ground of Galway United.

Once in Dublin for my field research, I found myself making the trip to Tallaght constantly—either attending matches or making large-scale banners on the weekdays with the ultras. On game day I would step out onto Lord Edward Street in the city center, walk across the River Liffey, which divides the city, and jump on the metro headed towards Tallaght in the south end. As the train neared the last stop, I would find myself amongst a growing trail of supporters marked by green and white scarves, hooped jerseys, and Shamrock Rovers pins. But the journey to Tallaght was only the beginning of my own learning process in which I found that supporters mapped out their collective experiences and subjectivities based on urban space and place. Working and spending time with the ultras in particular meant making trips all around Dublin to various work spaces, pubs, and stadiums, which helped me to understand the relationship between Rovers supporters and the city. Various neighborhoods and locales became significant reference points for Shamrock Rovers supporters.

On the fringes of the city, the neighborhood of Tallaght is an odd mix of shopping malls, big box stores, and a few ever-present and strung-out-looking heroine addicts hanging out at the bus stop. Many of the buildings are new, but Tallaght has a gritty edge that won't go away. On the edge of the city, you can see the countryside from the stadium. Though the ground blended in with the increasingly modern architecture of the neighborhood, the area didn't really seem to characterize the identity of the club as far as I could tell, save for the statement of fact I kept hearing—that Tallaght saved the Rovers. Rather than hone in on Tallaght as the only defining locale of Shamrock Rovers, it instead served as a space in which supporters articulated the places and the people all over Dublin that defined the Rovers community over the last decades. This included their opponents and the places in Dublin that could only be described as enemy territory.

Tallaght wasn't a locale that had fully seeped into the performed identity of the club because it was relatively new territory. Transient and homeless, the team had been renting out other clubs' stadiums all over Dublin for the last two decades in the north and south of the city. As Karl told me, the sale of Milltown "really fucked the club up" —so, the emotional baggage ran deep. Before a match against Dundalk, the fans marched from the site of Glenmalure Park to Tallaght to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Milltown's demolition. Just two days before, Louis Kilcoyne had died. Karl, penned the lyrics to an Irish Republican tune called The Lonesome Boatman during the march—

"Louis Kilcoyne your wife's a widow, she's been replaced by a dildo."

"We were all thinking there has to be a good atmosphere at this game," he said. "So the next weekend we're playing at Tallaght and the place was hopping singing this song." Karl was in his mid-twenties at the time—too young to have experienced Milltown himself. The anger

and continued reflection upon this history transcended the divide between the generations of supporters at Shamrock Rovers.

On matchday, the trail of Rovers supporters would lead across the street from Tallaght Stadium to the Maldron Hotel. A rather chic place for a bunch of boisterous football supporters, the hotel had embraced the cash flow, lining the walls with green and white stripes and several old Rovers jerseys. The Maldron was a good place to get a sense of the diversity of the Rovers scene, ranging from gruff middle-aged men, fathers with their sons, a few teenage girls, the ultras, to “the Casuals” who still occasionally fought other like-minded groups from other clubs. The ultras, who I spent most of my time with, seemed to have the most free reign over Tallaght Stadium, walking through security and back out again hours before the match to set up large hand-made banners, flags, lay out crowd covers, and to smuggle in marine flares from time to time. The ultras were often old enough so that they no longer went to games with their dads but were young enough so that they didn’t have families and wives to distract them from devoting large blocks of time to making complicated banners and designing crowd choreography during the week.

As I became familiar with Tallaght Stadium, I noticed that the conglomeration of supporters at the Maldron fanned out into different blocks on the East and West Stands. Once through the turnstiles, the families could be found in the East section above the players’ tunnel and behind the benches. People in the West Stand tended to come to relax, have a few beers, eat some fried sausage, and watch Rovers. This was the demographic that Shamrock Rovers’ outlandish mascot, Hooperman, was for. At the other end in the East Stand, Hooperman was sung about with loving irony.

“He drinks, he fucks, Hooperman, Hooperman...”

Located in the East Stand, Block M was the section where the more raucous activity occurred and where the ultras congregated. It was the focal point of crowd atmosphere. A group of around twenty, the ultras waved large green, white, and black flags, lead the chants, and jumped around on the terraces. The seats in the East Stand didn't get much use, because if you congregated in Block M it was understood you wanted to participate in the festivities and the atmosphere. Marine flares were the final component of the ultras' repertoire, which elevated the crowd spectacle to new levels. On its best days, the orange smoke, the sound of chants, and the constant movement made for a crowd experience that Sal described as *controlled chaos*.

Sal's characterization aptly described the vibe that ultras were trying to create. A side effect of this atmosphere was outsiders' misinterpretation of the messages that the ultras were trying to send. Generally speaking, crowd choreography could be perceived as threatening, unpredictable, and reflective of preconceived notions regarding fans' violent proclivities. However, I found that chaos was choreography and that raucous behavior was rife with deeper meaning. Songs underscored broadly accepted community narratives. If you had an ear to discern the songs being sung and went to enough matches to learn them, such moments of controlled chaos became evocative retellings of stories—even celebrations.

"Take me home Milltown Road to the place I belong, Tallafornia saved the Rovers..."

At any given match, it only took the first word for the rest of Block M to join in with their chests out and arms raised. The ultras, who were leaders in the block in terms of cultivating atmosphere, however, didn't elect a capo. Instead, the acoustic components of atmosphere

operated based on an egalitarian form of song selection. In theory, anyone could start a chant if they knew the repertoire and had a good sense of situational context and timing. Much like at EHC Dynamo, hierarchy in the block influenced who was able to convincingly “sell” new songs and thus impact stylistic and visual aesthetics of collective performance over time. Crowd activity and atmosphere thrived off these points of reference that the group identified with as significant to the Shamrock Rovers community. Stories elevated to myth are sung, learned, and re-sung game after game, recreating past events, people, and places.

When I stood at Tallaght Stadium and sang on Block M, one of the most important things to know about the surrounding neighborhood was that Tallifornia saved the Rovers. This new locale and stadium was the end of the rainbow in the Shamrock Rovers’ narrative and the space served as a platform in which dramatic interpretations were constructed of the way things were and the way they are now. Block M specifically was the performative focal point in which stories, fact, and fiction were written into songs, embodied, and performed by the crowd. Performance map Dublin into an experiential realm for its inhabitants in ways that define, dramaticize, and inflame local relationships. This process constructs alternate realities that are conceived in the stadium, but are also deeply connected to the city that surrounds it.

I have thus far argued that the historical trajectory of Shamrock Rovers and its relationship to place was integral to the cultivation of atmosphere as a dynamic cultural field of experience. Performance distilled this collective experience through the convergence of time and place—then and now, Milltown and Tallaght. On Block M, home is enacted as a multi-layered construct in which Milltown is integrated into the contemporary experience at the new stadium in Tallaght. This experiential reach through time that layered place upon place was a key instrument of cultural production and socialization in the fan block at a time

when results on the pitch were hard to watch. At Tallaght, the salience of loss and placelessness were essential aspects of recreating atmosphere, but the salience of this trauma could now be reenacted with the knowledge that the narrative had an ending in the relocation to Tallaght.

Shifting Atmospheres, Shifting Subjectivities

If precarity and placelessness were defining characteristics of fandom at Shamrock Rovers, this experiential aspect played an important role in fans' appropriation of the sonic and visual aesthetics of *ultra*. The fans who took on this creative responsibility modulated the affective pulse in the ground at a time in the club's history that Eoghan described as "Irish Sport's longest funeral." This performative and stylistic change reoriented the attention of its participants toward the activities on the terrace at strategic moments, making performance the focal point instead of the match itself. Through this new style of support, the fans that collectively organized the lighting of pyrotechnics and coordinated crowd support saw themselves not only as Rovers fans, but now identified as a group called the *SRFC Ultras*. This selective appropriation of style and ideology not only modulated the atmosphere in the stadium; it also reoriented its participants toward a transnational plane of identification and belonging that enacted a rebellious response to the alienating circumstances of Irish football fandom. Why is it that while Eoghan and his friends were looking for excuses to stop coming that new people were showing up to games? How can such grim circumstances not only be tolerable, but exciting—fascinating, even?

Formed in 2002, the SRFC Ultras were part of an explosion of *ultra* groups across Europe in the early 2000's. Though *ultra* had emerged in Italy in the late 1960's and

developed into a cohesive style of fan support around the country, it was not until several decades later that a predominantly Italian phenomenon became globally recognizable (Gabler 2013). This was due in part to the increasing ease with which photos, videos, forums, and thus discourse proliferated, resultantly developing broadly spanning *mobile matrices*—“sets of styles aesthetics, knowledges, and ideologies that move in and out of localities and cross-cut modalities” (Alim 2009, 123). With the circulation of videos, images, and discourse, a set of performative components cohered as the performative characterization of *ultra*—continuous singing, flag-waving, the use of banners, and pyrotechnics. Within these parameters, there was ample opportunity for groups to create a unique visual and sonic aesthetic. Increasingly accessible content from the terraces of other clubs across Europe and South America developed rapidly into an aesthetically cohesive and variable form of crowd support, providing a stark alternative to a previously British-influenced form of support which was dying as standing terrace in England was done away with and rising ticket costs pushed the traditional fan base out of the stadiums. In showing the trajectory of these changes, I underscore that identity is not static or singular, but is instead an ongoing process of social and political deliberation (Bucholtz and Hall 2003, 376).

A British Vibe

Historically, British supporter culture had been the dominant form of cultural influence in Ireland. The appearance of football fans at Shamrock Rovers and the style of support in the stadium reflected this. Stylistically in sharp contrast to *ultra*, the British form of support was characterized by intermittent chants that were contingent upon the events transpiring on the field. In this way, attention was intently focused on the game. In terms of

experience, songs and as a result, the atmosphere, could be elevated in short bursts, only to quiet down again until the next song was initiated perhaps several minutes later. And the songs were short too—usually two to four lines long, a verse was usually sung twice, meaning that a song in this context might be thirty seconds long. These developments entered into popular circulation in the form of books, movies, and media. The ultras at Shamrock Rovers even compared my arrival in Dublin to the plot of *Green Street Hooligans*, starring Elijah Wood, as an American who moves to England and joins a hooligan “firm” at West Ham FC in London. Many of the songs that the ultras still sang had been songs for years already—and the style was drastically different than the new ones the ultras had begun to bring in. In addition to the overall approach to atmosphere in the stadium, the old songs directly reflected the British inspiration as well. Adopting and adapting the lyrics from London’s Millwall FC, Rovers still sang their own version of the song to the melody of the Rod Stewart song, “We are Sailing.”

*We are Rovers, super Rovers
No one likes us, we don't care.
We hate Bohs, Orange bastards,
And we'll fight them anywhere.*

Inspiration from British supporter culture extended past the appropriation of musical cues, and further into the ways in which violence was enacted on the terrace more generally.

In this way, the mythos of hooliganism still colored the atmosphere at Shamrock Rovers matches. The organized fighting that was occurring in England was adopted in practice on the streets of Dublin in the 70’s and 80’s between groups of supporters called Casuals, and the performance on the terrace between Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians FC reflected this in particular. Many songs that I heard served as an enactment of a historical

mythology, narrating fights between the supporters of past decades. “The time of Bohemians being our biggest rivals coincided with the birth of hooligan culture in England in the 80’s,” Fiachra told me. “We were the only clubs big enough to do it like the English did, so that’s how it started. Now that’s the story. [Obviously I wasn’t alive, that was the 70’s.]”

“So you feel like the rivalry is sort of connected by the violence between the opposition support?” I asked.

“Yeah, definitely. Even though most people wouldn’t take any part of it we all still sing about it. All those songs about Bohs—nearly every single one of them is about fighting,” Hooliganism, then, as a cultural referent still existed within the fan scene at Shamrock Rovers and was elevated as a dimension of performative interaction on matchday (Jack 2013).

But more nuanced than a simple adoption of the cultural performance of fighting, the violent edge to the songs at Shamrock Rovers was a distinct reference to the supporters adaptation of the *Casual* subculture in England. Developing in a stylistically similar pattern as Mod, *Casual* was the self-identifying term for most football fans that engaged in organized fighting (in sharp distinction with the top-down identifying term “hooligan”). The name was originally coined after the style of clothes individuals within the subculture wore to evade detection by the authorities in public spaces and at the stadium. Brands that became associated with Casual were high-end clothing companies that were often extremely expensive. The clothing traditionally served a dual purpose, acting as camouflage from authorities and indicating to those within the subculture who was a part. Stone Island, with its distinctive compass symbol on the sleeve, was the most iconic indicator of one’s involvement in the scene and that you were probably up for a fight before or after the match. But while

Casuals still existed and operated at Shamrock Rovers, the subculture was at its peak in the 1980's in terms of organized fighting and subcultural identification. Having already gone through the process of subcultural resistance and commercial defusion of style with subcultural ideology (Hebdige 1979), the popularity of Casuals' visual style persisted long after the lifestyle with which it was associated had waned. Many of the ultras adopted a Casual style of dress, wearing very specific vintage Adidas sneakers and expensive windbreakers from contemporary Casual-inspired brands like Peaceful Hooligan and Casual Connoisseur. My point here is not that all British cultural influence was thrown by the wayside at Shamrock Rovers in the early 2000's, but that Casual became significant to ultras' presentation of style globally. Through the defusion of the Casual style across the continent, the ultras reworked old subcultural aesthetics into a contemporary style, appropriating the cultural authenticity of the subculture while emplacing themselves within a larger milieu of *ultra* discourse and performative belonging.

* * *

So while professional football from Britain was being televised more broadly beginning in the 60's, I call attention again briefly to the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies to emphasize that the professionalization and commodification of football in Britain slowly alienated supporters from the teams that were meant to represent their communities (Cricher 1979). As socialization in the terraces became increasingly difficult and hooliganism was elevated in the media as a societal crisis (Hall 1978), the "armchair supporter" became the dominant type of fan, outnumbering those that went to matches. In the displacement of working-class fandom that had formed on the terrace, hooliganism was

regarded as the consequence of class conflict “in which the traditional forms of football watching encounter professionalization and spectacularisation of the game” (Clarke 1978, 50). All of this marked the beginning of the end of the participatory creativity and socializing potential of the crowd at football in England. Ticket prices had gotten so bad that when I went to see a match at Arsenal FC in London in 2008, I paid over \$100 to sit in the second tier of the stadium, quite far from the pitch. The popularization and broadcast of the British Premier League around the world occurred in conjunction with the waning of affect in the stadiums and the development softer expressions of fandom that have become normalized and mainstream.

So as ticket costs in the UK began pricing out the most active fans and all-seater stadiums replaced standing terraces to maximize revenue, cohesive community building in the stadium was severely diminished. At Shamrock Rovers, Paul watched and ultimately participated in the changes in supporter style that began in the early 2000’s.

“A lot of people would have seen fan culture in the UK as being on the way out—that fan culture had become very sanitized,” said Paul. “It was the all-seater stadiums. That would have had a lot to do with it. And all of a sudden that [scene] wasn’t producing new cues anymore.” As a result, supporters at Shamrock Rovers began to look elsewhere for performative inspiration.

Becoming ‘ultra’

Meanwhile, at Shamrock Rovers, one of the defining aspects of fandom was the club’s perpetual financial precarity, which was reinforced by the team’s homelessness. Coupled with poor results on the pitch, atmosphere was at an all time low. The decline of

English supporter culture prompted a redirection of interest toward the Italian football scene, which had been producing an entirely different visual and sonic aesthetic in the stands for decades, though few fans, if anyone, was aware of it in Ireland at the time. “What the ultras did—you had lads who were suddenly going to Rome and hooking up with the Irish Clan [an *ultra* group from AS Roma],” said Eoghan. “They looked beyond England to the continent, which is extremely rare for any Irish person to do. There were no Ultras in the UK, like in England and Scotland—none of that.” With increasing access to *ultra* through new technological mediums, the SRFC Ultras did not transplant *ultra* as a coherent ideological or aesthetic entity into the block, but rather were able to “selectively adopt, adapt, and/or reject varying aspects” (Alim 2009, 123) for their distinctive social and political context.

“Some of the guys took a liking to big flags,” Paul noted. “During a game against Bohs in 2001, someone managed to get their hands on a load of flares. And the thing is, it just looked so fucking cool. It made what had been drab and boring bright and colorful and noisy. So it added a whole new aesthetic to the matchday experience. I just think that once they tried it—that ultra style thing—they knew that was the right way to go.” (Personal Interview 2012)

But in the initial years of *ultra* at Shamrock Rovers, the pathways of circulation and access to the right materials required connections and creative methods of smuggling. Marine flares were not readily accessible to civilians who were not working or living on boats. “Rovers have friends in Greece, in Austria, in Sweden, and even up in the north [of Ireland] who can get [flares], so we usually get them sent to us,” Karl mentioned. “Joe worked in a security company out near Tallaght, so he would get somebody in Germany to send him over a box—and because he worked in a security company they wouldn’t be checked in customs going through the airport, so that’s how we got them into the country. The first person on the box would be him.” Achieving the desired visual aesthetic in the stadium thus required

forging underground pathways into the Republic of Ireland. The SRFC Ultras' contacts needed to be diverse and many, as channels closed and others opened depending on fluctuating circumstances and unforeseen variables.

Appropriation is part of a larger process in which performativity is created and recreated through collective experience. While the first generation of ultras at Shamrock Rovers radically altered the visual dimension of support on the terrace, it was the second generation—the young men that I knew best—that began incorporating a different sonic aesthetic into the repertoire, and more broadly, continued to change the mentality around participation. In spite of the remaining British influence, the visual and sonic aesthetics shifted from short and sporadic chants to songs designed for long repetition and seamless continuity for the entirety of the match. The remediation of performative aesthetics—“that which transfers content from one format to another, thereby making media new, and making new media”—is a process that through its circulation makes new identities from its participants (Novak 2010, 41).

“When we got access to the Internet, the fan culture changed,” said Paul. “A lot of chants have a more South American feel [now]. With the initial Ultras, it would have been very English, the chants. But it became more European—Italian, Swedish. What happened is that travel became cheaper as well so you would have got a lot of people traveling abroad to games and coming here. So you were kind of mixing with supporters from other countries. I wouldn’t say it’s unrecognizable, but there were a lot of [British] songs that were being sung every game in the early 2000’s that you don’t hear at Rovers anymore. The younger people come in with new ideas and they’ve been exposed to different things than us” (Personal Interview 2012).

Sound would no longer be utilized as a momentary spark to jump-start action, but instead shifted toward the development of an immersive and continuous environment that at its height was palpably intermaterial—you could *feel* it inside you, moving through air, bone,

and flesh. You could also see it around you, in the massive flags that swirled through the air, the flares that painted everything orange, and the synchrony of the crowd's movements. Through this process, the ultras initiated an atmospheric overhaul, which modulated to suit the situation on the terrace. As more songs were adapted for the terrace and more supporters were won over by the new style, the atmosphere bloomed.

As pre-existing songs were altered to fit a changing aesthetic, new songs were also adopted and adapted to better create atmospheres that hinged on continuity rather than the British style, which emphasized short spurts of collective action accompanied by short 8-bar verses. With performative aesthetics slowly changing, lyrics also became secondary to fostering continuous participation, meaning that catchy rhythms and melodies could be learned quickly if longer verses were no longer a factor in collective performance. The second generation of ultras incorporated a number of songs that eliminated lyrics all together, instead placing emphasis on the repetition of catchy melodies and accompanying Latin rhythms.

This change in style was epitomized in Karl's creation and subsequent modification of *Louis Kilcoyne, Your Wife's a Widow*, which had been catchy and topically well received at the time of Kilcoyne's death. But Karl also felt that the tune had potential to have a lasting presence in the repertoire if some modifications were made to the original after immediate contextual relevance of Kilcoyne's passing. When the song was struck up at the next match, Karl got on the drum and told everyone to sing the tune—a Republican IRA song called *The Lonesome Boatman*—and drop the 'Louis Kilcoyne' lyrics. The original folk tune, popularized by The Fureys, was performed on the flute—now it was being sung by hundreds of young men bouncing to a Latin rhythm in the East Stand. Much like *Dale Kavese*, which

was sung at the match for Joe, The Lonesome Boatman became synonymous with celebration, sung after a goal when the team was winning, or even to honor the life of a deceased member. In this way, atmosphere acted as a metadiscursive resource (Fox 2004, 241) in which lyrics could have an immediate contextual relevance and melodies could cue historically/socially specific political affiliation (Irish Republican) as a part of a broader *ultra* style of performative subjectivity.

Modulating Atmosphere

I want to emphasize that atmosphere is not a static structure built around an aesthetic style—it is a dynamic, fluid, and situational field of experience. Collective action, as it was conceived, cultivated, and experienced in the East Stand, was aimed at harnessing affect and modulating atmosphere in order to influence outcomes on the pitch. As it relates to the match and the broader sociopolitical contexts from which it permeates, performance is both reactive and proactive, responding to unfolding events with the intention of influencing the future. “The whole *ultra* mentality, I think, is taking the job upon yourself to keep the atmosphere going and get the best atmosphere that you can,” said Karl. “The whole job is to get the crowd united.” If the repetitive call-and-response of *Come on Rovers!—Come on Rovers!—Come on Rovers!* is called when the opposition has scored a goal, atmosphere in this moment is meant create an intensive state of urgency that should push the players to react—to counteract the blow that is felt when the team falls behind.

“It’s like you’re trying to transport your energy to the players,” Eoghan said. In this way, performance is meant to operationalize mood, harnessing affect in a trajectory that will benefit Shamrock Rovers. Different chants have different functions. In contrast to

Come on Rovers, the celebratory release of *The Lonesome Boatman* and its Latin rhythm basks in positive situations as they unfold on the pitch, propelling the affective momentum that the players have created. With this in mind, ultras are in the business of influencing affect's momentum as it relates to the outcome of the match. Atmosphere engages the future and the past in the present, always directed toward future outcomes. "When the chips are down get behind [the team]; if times are good, celebrate," explained Karl casually. But the purpose behind the cultivation of atmosphere wasn't singular.

"These choreographies you do—is that for someone else to see it or is it for you to be in it?" I asked Sal.

"I've honestly asked myself that question a few times," he said. "It's really hard to explain why we actually do this. We obviously want the players to see it and be inspired by it, but it's not dedication to the players at all really. It's more about the colors of the club and just showing our passion." Paradoxically, the shift in atmosphere also reoriented focus inward the collective action on the terrace, consolidating the social structure of the fan block at a time when attendance was very poor. In this way, performance and process are key to the circulatory nature of cultural production (Novak 2013) and the ongoing development of collective subjectivities. At Shamrock Rovers, adopting a new performative aesthetic game in and game out altered the atmosphere and social lives of those dedicated to keeping the atmosphere high at every match. At a time when morale was at an all-time low on the pitch, the visual spectacle on the terrace was elevated to new heights, incorporating large and small flags, or *tifosi*, in addition to the use of nautical marine flares at matches. "That was always the ultras' mantra," Eoghan said. "*You become the spectacle.*"

In sum, looking elsewhere to the continent for performative inspiration was not only a change in aesthetic, but the birth of a new social life and collective mentality motivated by modulating atmosphere and influencing future outcomes. As was evident with the adoption of the group's name, the SRFC Ultras, purpose as hardcore Rovers fans now centered upon the cultivation of atmosphere. Because *ultra* is a performance practice defined by its circulation, growing networks, and culturally unique modulations, the SRFC Ultras re-oriented themselves with a global purview. While one aspect of the intentionality of songs and choreographies was to inspire the players on the field, the work to make this possible required significant time spent outside the stadium brainstorming ideas, buying materials, and doing basic manual labor cutting, sewing, and painting. This emphasized a group social life and a collective mentality in and outside the stadium that backgrounded spectating as the focal point of collective experience.

Created through a performative aesthetic that emphasized sonic continuity and Latin rhythm, marine flares and smoke canisters established a visual aesthetic that replaced oppressive atmospheres of despair and ruptured narratives of competitive and financial failure. Combining sonic and visual elements, the new style of atmosphere completely overshadowed and overwhelmed the football match as the focal point of the sporting event.

"I think it's better if you can keep the one song going constantly for a long time," said Fiachra. "It just sounds good and it builds a rhythm to the drums. The first time I remember seeing that at Rovers was just incredible—it was the 2004 season. It was a shit season. But the ultras just lit flares from the start non-stop for forty-five minutes and for that forty-five minutes you couldn't even see the game—the stand was just full of smoke. And for forty-five minutes we sang Build Me Up Buttercup. I didn't even see the game—I have no idea what happened in that first half. It was brilliant."

Flares are the performative nexus of protest, public rupture, and emotive transcendence. The neon orange light coupled with billowing smoke that delays matches is a form of creative destruction that superimposes a new experience atop preexisting circumstances. Across matrices of performative style and local experience, it is through appropriation, participation, and an accompanying lifestyle required to offer constant support that opens avenues for transnational identification with *ultra*. Rupture of everyday affects is the creative and experiential entrypoint for *ultra* as a manifestation of a transnational public culture.

Conclusions

At Shamrock Rovers, atmosphere was harnessed by the ultras as a dynamic apparatus in which participation and socialization within the context of the crowd created new narratives and opportunities to emotionally circumvent traumatic outcomes—or in this case, the results of financial and competitive failure on the pitch. Yet in the present day, I saw that atmosphere was also used as a mode of catharsis—that which relived the trauma and precarity of homelessness. In this way, the past and the present existed in tandem as a mode of understanding the Shamrock Rovers narrative. Feeling this trauma was key to collective understanding across generations of fans. While holding on to the salience of loss, the founding of the SRFC Ultras' also marked a shift in mentality—one that emphasized a collective orientation toward cultivating atmosphere. Through the adoption and adaptation of aesthetics geared toward harnessing affect in the stadium, crowd action created new subjects that identified with the *ultra* movement itself across the specifics of locality.

Previously reliant upon cues from British styles of football fandom including casual and hooligan subcultures, the ultras reoriented socialization at Shamrock Rovers around

crowd action, making the cultivation of atmosphere *the point* of showing up. Through a new ethos and performative style of support that relied on non-stop participation, new songs, drums, and flares became mainstays of support and drastically elevated the atmosphere in the stadium. As such, the ultras modulated atmosphere in order to rupture and transcend circumstances that were out of their control. These ideological positions opened up performative possibilities that created new avenues for collective experience, which interacted with and actively postured against the dominant values and avenues of discourse and cultural identification in the Irish public sphere. The shift in style of support at Shamrock Rovers from a markedly English style to *ultra* enhanced the salience of locality while its adoption, adaption, and performance was also key to transnational belonging.

4 – Insurgent Fandom

Chapter 4 outlines the performative response of Irish ultras to capitalist strategies of global marketing and television programming that have popularized British football in the Republic of Ireland. In consideration of social precarity as a general trend accompanied by millennial capitalism, I examine specifically how the marketing of the most competitive football leagues around the world has atrophied spectatorship and fandom in local contexts such as the League of Ireland. This has radicalized the subjectivities of football fans that continue to hold onto traditional ideologies of support (i.e. attending all matches / the fans are the club)—ideologies that are romanticized but rarely practiced by mainstream fans of the game. At Shamrock Rovers, support in the stadium in the *ultra* style became its own method of asserting the tangibility of local community and *real Irishness* amidst the broad cultural changes oriented toward the consumption of televised football that maintained the perceived Irish gaze toward the more competitive and financially dominant English Premier League.

Amidst the particulars of Shamrock Rovers' financial and economic woes in the 2000's, the League of Ireland (LOI) was a commercial wasteland that attracted little television revenue or investors due to the broader commercial dominance of the British Premier League in the Republic of Ireland. This issue highlights the larger economic dynamics in which English and American media dominated Irish popular culture. As it related to football in Ireland, the dissemination and promotion of the British Premier League and Scottish Premier League degraded the popularity of local Irish football teams in favor of televised football that was deemed a higher quality product, meaning that the players on the field played at a higher skill level, and therefore were more exciting to watch. In the decades

starting in the 60's, fandom in Ireland switched from traditional models of support that saw Shamrock Rovers filling their stadium at Milltown, to the present day where normal attendance was usually around two to three thousand. The shift over the last few decades had changed the general disposition of football fans in Ireland to those that defined fandom through various practices of consumption hinging primarily on televised spectatorship as the primary mode of entry into a collective imaginary. Irish fans supported British football clubs such as Manchester United, Liverpool, and Arsenal FC, attracting millions more followers in Ireland than the local clubs. The ultras called them *barstoolers*. In contrast to this archetype, the ultras didn't even like the word 'fan' to describe themselves and differentiated themselves as *supporters*.

Alienating the ultras further, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), the Republic of Ireland's governing body for football, allocated most of its time and money toward investing in the Irish National Team as opposed to its own domestic league. Unlike the League of Ireland (LOI), the Irish national team garnered the attention of the entire country and subsequently greater degrees of commercial investment. The SRFC Ultras, however, were apathetic about the results of the national team and found the FAI's priorities to be misdirected and hypocritical. As a result, being a fan of a team in the League of Ireland who actually attended matches was a niche practice, making in-person support not only a foreign practice, but also incomprehensible and even looked down upon by barstoolers for domestic Irish players' lack of "quality." As such, the ultras at Shamrock Rovers saw themselves in contrast to this popularized style of fandom, adopting a slogan that circulated within the loops of *ultra* discourse—*Against Modern Football*.

Backlash and public misunderstanding was a defining feature of the group's broader experience. Vilified by the FAI and deemed a risk to public safety, the ultras were also feared by non-fans as hooligans. Pyrotechnics not only scared people who weren't familiar with *ultra*, they were illegal and regularly earned Shamrock Rovers FC fines from the FAI. Reveling in and reinforcing their marginality, performance took on the role of rebellion. The SRFC Ultras blurred their faces on social media and obscured identifying markers with scarves while lighting flares. Here action is insurgent because it is oriented toward creating shifts in atmosphere through stylized claims to public space and place. Collective action did not necessarily change their position in Irish sport or serve as a bridge to understanding between them and the FAI or the broader public. Instead, I argue that group performance made belonging to the ultras an act of social insularity but global solidarity with the *ultra* movement.

Connected through competitive interaction between groups in the stadium in addition to the circulation of discourse and international travel, *ultra* as a larger movement is based on an implicitly shared experiential understanding around atmosphere and lifestyle that extends across the specificities of local circumstance. Competition (which groups made better atmosphere) was integral to the relationships between Irish *ultra* groups in the stadium. Songs are meant to drown out the away support, stickers cover stickers placed by other groups on the streets, graffiti tags mark neighborhood territories, and choreographies in the stadium become more complex season after season. This style of social practice, which is oriented toward performance as a generative enactment of community and locality stands in direct contrast to the commercialization of sport and the increasingly global fan identifications with football clubs that are broadcasted and marketed around the world (i.e. Barcelona, Real

Madrid, Manchester United, Chelsea FC, etc). For the SRFC Ultras, belonging pertains to the collective connection to place. This is claimed through doing, capital garnered through the group's ability to maximize the crowd's affective capacities.

Radicalizing Subjectivity

The *ultra* subjectivity can be compared to literature on the alienating and radicalizing effects of neoliberalism upon disenfranchised communities on both ends of the political spectrum (Khasnabish 2010, Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, Shoshan 2016, Teitelbaum 2017). The claims to traditional styles of fan support championed by the SRFC Ultras (i.e. consistent participation and that the fans are the club) have made the ultras an endangered species as it pertains to broader fan subjectivity and practice, which is increasingly reliant on varying degrees of media and merchandise consumption. This is reflective of broader cultural trends in which identity is increasingly expressed through consumption (Harvey 1989, Jameson 1991). Further, at Shamrock Rovers there was the general perception that the LOI had been abandoned by the FAI because of its lack of financial viability—an integral aspect that impacted the ultras' perspectives of marginality. This lack of concern for the League of Ireland and its fans is remarkably similar to scholarship on neoliberalism that argues the government is designed to streamline the flow of capital rather than attend to the needs of the population (Harvey 2005). These broad shifts in the logics of capitalism, governance, and globalization have had a significant impact on the ultras' perceived marginal positionality in the broader sphere of football fandom and have lead in part to a public style of performance that flagrantly rejects the authority and policies of various football governing bodies. The ultras' performative dynamic rubs up against the idealized role of the modern liberal

democratic subject, whose primary utility has been demarcated as a consumer-citizen (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Gaonkar 2014, Mazzarella 2017).

In contrast to the barstooler, the SRFC Ultras were keen to show that they were critically aware of the commercialized state of professional sport, and that they were not compliant consumers of that product. The SRFC Ultras' disdain for consumerist practices associated with modern fandom and the FAI's de-prioritization of the LOI and its lack of interest in its own fans became fodder that justified the ultras' performative style and the illegal use of flares. As such, the appropriation of the *ultra* aesthetic at Shamrock Rovers was its own form of protest, that which performed the emotive product of "real" fandom missing from modern football—*passion*. Tradition (fan culture handed down generationally) was key to this conceptualization of passion. Support—singing, flag-waving, and lighting flares—served as a foil to modern sport as leisure (i.e. sitting down and watching the game). Demanding attention, *ultra* was meant to grate against the status quo. For the SRFC Ultras' fifteenth anniversary, for instance, the group lit so many flares in the stadium that a photo of the scene filled the entire back page of the newspaper the next day. While the production of *ultra* is on the cutting edge of global circulation, tradition that connects generations of fans is key to the authenticity of community that distinguishes itself from modern fandoms.

The paradox pertaining to the League of Ireland as a forgotten and neglected child of professional football was that it was untended enough to become a space in which both old and new imaginings of fandom could develop without significant repression. In consideration of LOI's lack of financial clout and the growth of the SRFC Ultras popularity in the early 2000's, I see the ultras' activities as an insurgent citizenship, which has emerged at the intersection of financial erosion and social expansion (Holston 1999, 166). As it related to the

founding of the SRFC Ultras, LOI stadiums offered a derelict (i.e. commercially undeveloped and governmentally underpoliced) space in which they could maintain alternative practices to mainstream fandom without much surveillance or league reprisal. And while both police violence and league sanctions certainly existed at professional football in Ireland, the intensity with which the ultras were managed by the state in Ireland was significantly lower than other countries. With this space for the ultras to maneuver, the group's performative practices can be conceived as "insurgent forms of the social" (Holston 1996, 166), which enabled the continued growth and proliferation of practices and subjectivities that subverted the ideology and discourse of modern fandom. Amidst the fragmentation of collective imaginaries that do not neatly align with nationalist projects (Appadurai 1996), *ultra* embodies the increasingly divergent and radicalized outlooks of the liberal democratic subject. This trend manifested in the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the ultras' terrace activities in the public sphere.

To best understand the subjectivities of the SRFC Ultras and the outsider perception of the group as hooligans, it is necessary to consider the *ultra* style of performance as an alternative to rational-critical discourse in the public sphere. Unlike Habermas' conception of the public sphere, which was defined by reasoned debate most often through the circulation of text (1962), Warner observes the friction created by groups in which embodied sociability takes precedence over rational-critical discourse as an idealized representation of humanity (Warner 2002, 123). Specifically, the SRFC Ultras' precarity in the context of Shamrock Rovers' financial woes in addition to their alienation from mainstream fandoms in Ireland set the stage for their radicalized style of support in the stadium—that which marked them as distinctly outside mainstream fandom/discourse as it relates to the logics of discipline and

constraint that constitute modern citizenship (Chakrabarty 2007, 37). In this way, the ultras experienced the asymmetrical nature of circulation, which is heavily weighted in favor of those with financial capital, magnifying certain voices and agendas while diminishing others (Habermas 1962 via Warner 2002). The reality that their perspective would not circulate outside the loops of *ultra* discourse was a mundane platitude, and participants knew that their collective action in the stadium, whether polite or provocative, was a bit like screaming into the wind in terms of influencing modern parameters of fandom. While other ethnographic research on football supporters shows the way that fans enact collective alternatives to the financial and social constraints of neoliberal democracy (Forment 2007, Magazine 2007), my interlocutors at Shamrock Rovers did not gear collective action toward an alternative future in which professional sport better promoted their values. Motivated instead by competing logics of protest and survival, the ultras' actions were oriented toward rupturing normalcy and the rush that accompanied this process.

SRFC Ultras Against Modern Football

The professionalization and commercialization of sport has dramatically changed the ways that football fandom socializes, more and more often through consumption of media and the expression of increasingly globalized subjectivities. Discourse in the arena of mainstream fandom was oriented unsurprisingly toward team results, match analysis, competitive rivalries, trade rumors, and athletes' personal narratives. In short, football has become a lucrative media enterprise set up similarly to the entertainment format of cable news, with newsrooms, up-to-the-minute reports, match analysis, journalistic reporting, and interviews. The British Premier League, for example, was broadcast in 202 countries in 2010.

The broadcasting rights in England cost \$7.8 billion dollars (The World Game 2018), marking the EPL as a product that has found a massive global market (and with it new fans) all the way to China, Singapore, Africa, and even the United States. To underscore the enthusiasm of the global market, Manchester United sold 2.85 million replica jerseys in 2016 (Bellshaw 2017), which begins to give an idea of the global identification with the Manchester United brand, and the importance of global fandom to the financial clout of professional football clubs in the neoliberal era. Fans were generally the backdrop to the sporting event, often portrayed as a global community united by football fandom (Vokes 2010). Specific to the Irish context, the ultras not only perceived a lack of interest in local football, but even a disdain for such an inferior competitive product from barstoolers.

Furthermore, Ireland's football governing body, the FAI, has historically had little interest in developing the League of Ireland into a modern or financially competitive league. The Chief Executive of the FAI, John Delaney's salary was 100,000 Euros more than the prize money for winning the league (Smith 2014).

"The way I see it is they're just out for money," said Collie (Personal Interview 2012). "They don't care about the football. Once John Delaney [the Commissioner of the FAI] is getting his paycheck he doesn't care."

"It goes right down to grassroots in Ireland with football," Dan added as we were talking over beers (Personal Interview 2012). "All the money the Irish National Team have made from the European Championships, none of that will go back into schoolboys football." And with very little external revenue, Shamrock Rovers were not the only club to have problems staying afloat financially. While the national broadcaster, RTE, did televise matches, no clubs received any financial compensation (Malone 2018). Television ratings of

LOI matches were much lower than the EPL, meaning that interest from sponsors was much lower as well. In sum, the money that flowed through the EPL was exponentially larger than the LOI. A number of LOI clubs only paid their players as part-time employees, so many of them also had day jobs. And while Shamrock Rovers was fully professional, the salaries they paid their players were a pittance in comparison to the major leagues elsewhere. At the time of my field research, the Tottenham Hotspur (London) star, Garreth Bale, was being paid \$820,000 for two months of work—the equivalent of the yearly wages for the entire Shamrock Rovers squad in 2011 (MacGuill 2011).

The lack of public interest, broadcasting, and minimal support from the FAI reinforced one another, making the financial void in the league highly visible. Stadiums were often in visible disrepair, and no club in the LOI could fill their grounds for almost any match. Dundalk's home stadium, Oriel Park, was particularly memorable. Made out of gray concrete, the walls surrounding the ground were lined with rusty barbed wire. Inside, the terraces were practically crumbling. And Dundalk had won the league several years in a row, qualifying for inter-European competition, which also earned them a significant amount of prize money. In 2018, the SRFC Ultras presented a banner at Oriel Park—“€6 mil and still no toilets, shelter, or facilities—Oriel is a DUMP!” Into his thirties by the time of our interview in 2012, Eoghan was growing tired of the general quality of the event that the LOI was able to put forth. “It's like, come to our dilapidated stadiums, piss behind a wall, eat before you come [because we don't have any food], and have some fucking sixteen year-olds skulling vodka behind you—this is what the LOI has put forth to the world and it's been roundly rejected. They just have no desire to change it.”

While Shamrock Rovers and the rest of the clubs within the LOI operated within a modern system of sporting governance, sponsorship, and broadcasting rights—they were unable to compete with the financial and competitive quality of the leagues closest to them. The lack of spectator demand created a scenario in which the right to broadcast LOI matches without paying for it was seen as fair compensation. And unlike clubs in the LOI that didn't have the financial resources, clubs in England hired scouts and funded youth academies in hopes of developing talent that could eventually join the senior teams. The rationale was investment. Ultimately the divergent financial situation yielded a spectating experience in Ireland that barely felt modern. Stadiums were falling apart, and the amenities that one takes for granted at contemporary professional sporting events were sparse or completely missing. This historical and financial backdrop limited interest in the LOI because it was seen as an inferior product to most consumers of football that could watch the superior competition of the English Premier League.

Conversely, the lack of financial strategies that stifled fan culture in leagues like the EPL offered a space in which the ultras had enough room to cultivate atmosphere. From this perspective, Modern Football was a financially motivated sphere of mediated discourse and fan subjectivities from which football was consumed primarily as an entertainment product that placed emphasis on results, competition, the highest quality of on-field performance, and the matchday as a spectacle of amenities and leisure. And while fandom was used to authenticate the importance of competition in the EPL, the discourse and lived experiences of ultras focused on performative support at matches and the ways those forms of socialization determined lifestyle and identity. These divergent philosophies were central to the ultras' antipathy toward Modern Football.

Alienation from Mainstream Fandom

Aside from their marginalization as supporters of Shamrock Rovers and the LOI, the SRFC Ultras placed a completely different set of ideals toward fandom and support that was not a part of mainstream discourse. With support defined as constant and consistent presence over time, the ultras took fandom to an extreme by mainstream standards.

“If you’re passionate about your club it’s because you put time and effort into it, you sacrifice for your club, you put money into it [for match tickets, bus tickets],” said Sal. While I have shown in Chapter 1 that participation is a discursive process that occurs between actors in the crowd, Shamrock Rovers Ultras also utilized public space as a backdrop for collective discourse that hinged on competition between *ultra* groups aimed at determining who created better atmosphere in the stadium. Through the mediation and circulation of performance, the SRFC Ultras placed themselves within a transnational sphere of performative discourse that authenticated them in contrast to the majority of Irish football fans who followed English or Scottish football. As a theme shared transnationally by ultras, “Against Modern Football” served as a discursive nexus of experience that crystallized differently through localized experience, always rejecting the commercial priorities of professional sport and cultural practices that they associated with consumptive forms of fandom.

From this orientation, the generalized discourse and identification with foreign football, its viewership on television, and the perceived arrogance of their disdain toward LOI supporters were key to a generalized disillusionment of LOI fans toward barstoolers. Further, it was the hypocrisy of the Irish barstooler’s identification with British clubs that

conversely added another degree of authenticity to what the ultras' style of support at Shamrock Rovers. *Ultra* enhanced the salience of place, community, and forged personal connection with people in the context of collective performance. As a result, it was the concept of locality and Irishness that were re-experienced at Shamrock Rovers from a new vantage point.

Eoghan noted how the change in performative style on the terrace constituted a radical deviation from mainstream Irish football fandom, but also from Irish popular culture.

“The whole ultras thing—the thing you have to understand is our complete reliance on England in just about every aspect of life,” Eoghan explained. “We read their newspapers, read their magazines, watch their TV programs—we’re convinced that Shay Goody is a celebrity in Ireland.” This is a particularly cutting criticism in consideration of the Republic of Ireland’s long fight for independence from British colonization. The dominance of British popular culture, football included, took on shadows of this legacy as the ultras looked elsewhere for sources of inspiration. “Irish football has always been a whole little brother of English football,” Sal said during our first ever interview. We were sitting outside the pub in the Maldron Hotel in 2012.

“Most people in this country only care about English football. We take a bit of pride in the fact that many Irish fans go over to [Manchester] United and sit in a stadium full of 78,000 in silence, but at home games we get four or five thousand and at away games it could be only a thousand people and it’s still much, much louder than those English stadiums. Back in 2001 people started to think, well let’s start borrowing further afield from a different kind of culture, so they used the Italian/European model of support and that became the benchmark for Irish sport,” Sal explained. “That’s why I think some of that stuff gets used—it’s a way of distancing ourselves from English supporter culture.”

The shifting atmosphere reoriented focus toward the terrace and bolstered solidarity, but also asserted a cultural difference and authenticity that demarcated Shamrock Rovers supporters and the ultras from the softer forms of football fandom in Ireland. In taking a performative approach that authenticated locality through sonic and visual spectacle, the competitive pedigree of a team was no longer a marker of cultural capital for ultras. Instead, *ultra* became a visual and physical way of enacting a different set of values that at its most basic worked to enhance the salience of local community through the cultivation of atmosphere in the stadium.

But this did not mean that the ultras were met with admiration or understanding by the media or the FAI. Instead, the ultras perceived a general dynamic in which they were considered dangerous—hooligans even.

“That’s the thing, people in Ireland who don’t watch LOI just don’t get it at all, they do not get the ultras thing at all because it doesn’t exist in England so it’s not in the culture or the media so they don’t even understand it,” Fiachra argued. Eoghan noted this dimension of outsider perception as well. “It was this thing about SRFC Ultras, that they are this hardcore hooligan group, and I’m thinking jeez I know the ultras—they’re a bunch of architects. They’re lawyers and teachers... People are naturally scared of what they don’t understand,” he continued. “...And so people just assumed this ultras crowd, they’re doing something totally different—something we’ve never seen, they must be dangerous. So people just assumed ultras were just this group hell bent on destroying Irish society basically, whereas all they were, were a bunch of lads having a bit of craic [fun] at a football game.”

“Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Shams?”

Positioned against financially motivated football governing bodies such as FIFA, UEFA, and the FAI, there is a certain moral authority that instigates and justifies the passion/protest of performance and pyrotechnics, and the ability of ultras to rupture the normative atmospheres and accompanying logics of public space. The result more broadly creates shared experiences for ultras in the ways that police, media, and sport governing bodies manage their actions and circulate discourse that frames them as deviants. As a topic of transnational discourse, the SRFC Ultras' talked about their own repression, which became a platform to comment upon problems with the police, ideological conflicts with the FAI, and subsequently their poor reputation in the public sphere. [Part of Black Corner's difficulties earning respect from the broader *ultra* scene in Germany, for instance, had to do with their counterparts' perceptions that the group hadn't encountered the same degrees of police repression in the context of professional ice hockey] Repression, then, was an important aspect of transnational belonging. When the ultras sing—“*We are Rovers, Super Rovers, No one likes us, we don't care,*” it is the dynamic tension between the ultras' performative style and the logics of public space that both works to reinforce and embrace their alienation in the public sphere.

By violating the norms of stranger sociability in public space, the SRFC Ultras subverted this public norm by hiding their identities, which was most apparent when ultras' used pyrotechnics and posted the photographs online. After the use of pyrotechnics at the FAI League Cup Final in 2016, for instance, the FAI Director of Competition described the scenes as “shocking” and “despicable” in response to parent responses that their children had been subject to “grave danger” at the match (2016). In this way, the FAI asserted their interest in the public safety of spectators to claim moral authority regarding Irish ultras'

continued the breach of the rules, and further, aimed to convince club administrations to apply localized pressure on rule breakers. In 2012 when I was in Dublin, the Shamrock Rovers administration began searching on social media for individuals who used pyrotechnics, prompting the SRFC Ultras to begin blurring members' faces in all online posts. Lighting flares became an insurgent act, predicated upon the anonymity of the individual. For the SRFC Ultras, creating a visceral atmosphere through collective action warranted publicly covert action.

So, Shamrock Rovers FC, the FAI, and the media all took a position against pyrotechnics as a risk to public safety. Lighting flares technically made the ultras criminals in a legal sense and “problem fans” from a league perspective. From an emotive standpoint, many outsiders also found flares scary and aggressive. In fact, the media often used pictures of ultras using flares as a stand in for violent and deviant behavior at sporting events. Despite the social intricacies and the ideologies that motivate participation, face-to-face gathering is quick to be branded by the press as “mob mentality” (Cody 2015, 52), which is positioned as the converse to the “self-regulating agentive capacities of reading publics” (ibid, 56). Fascination/fear is the sharp edge that guides entrance into the sphere of participation, while pushing most away. These polarizing reactions are key to the ultras' alienated position in the public sphere. But for Davy, atmosphere was the whole point of attending matches in the first place.

“Is there anything in particular about the games that attracted you in particular?” I asked.

“It was mainly the atmosphere of being at a football match, because before that I was a Liverpool fan. Watching that on the TV was [OK] but I wasn't actually there and I wanted

to be there. And that's what Rovers brought to the situation. I was at a game, I was watching live football, and the atmosphere of being at a game was unbelievable." The change in atmosphere is especially dramatic after a flare is lit. "Usually where the flare is, that's where the atmosphere is generated," Karl said during our interview. "So it's kind of like the light that everything is shining from."

My intent has been to highlight the wide variance in interpretation of crowd action and flares in association with *ultra*. *This distinction between fascination and fear in the context of collective action is the key to belonging or exclusion from ultra as a transnational sphere of discourse.*

The Competitive-Discursive Dimension of Atmosphere

Public discomfort around the SRFC Ultras protest of modern fandom articulates the ways in which urban space is "constitutive of power" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003 via Lefebvre 1991), in that social relations are impacted and transformed by competing claims to space (Low 2017). The ultras' performative and collective movement through urban space acted as a means of experiencing Dublin as a site of intimate belonging *and* alienation from normative visions of modern fandom and Irishness at large. In stadia and on the streets, chants and graffiti acted as a competitive means of laying claim to Dublin between *ultra* groups.

A few weeks after the Joe display, Fiachra, Karl, and I took a taxi to Tolka Park from city center for Rovers' away game against Shelbourne—another club based in Dublin. We had spent a number of hours the previous week preparing a choreography for the match. Carrying the materials, we walked down the street past the police, who were sitting atop

horses. Waiting in line to get through the turnstiles, it took too long to get from the entrance to the covered terrace where the away supporters normally stand. The adhesive keeping the banner together disintegrated and the group decided not to present it at all. “It’s really an ‘ultras-fail’ if you get caught making a display that just doesn’t work—you really get the piss taken out of you,” Fiachra said. “So in the end we had to leave it.” But the group had nonetheless managed to smuggle a number of flares into the ground, passing them out before the players were to walk onto the pitch.

The Rovers contingent, located near the midfield line, was facing away from the game and towards the Shelbourne Ultras, singing,

“Where the fuck is your support—where the fuck is, where the fuck is, where the fuck is your support?!”

But several minutes later, Shels scored, sparking wild celebration from the hardcore support in the terrace behind the goal. After a few initial moments of silence and disappointment in the Riverside Stand, the Rovers support started chanting a rhythmic call-and-response with each other,

“Come on Rovers—Come on Rovers—Come on Rovers!”

as the team scooped the ball out of their own net and resumed play. Several minutes later, Rovers equalized. Collie and a bunch of others rushed down the terraces, leaning over the railing, as close as they could get to the Shels supporters, and gave them the finger, laughing as they sang,

“You’re not singing anymore!”

Collective discourse is engrained in the embodied practice of its participants, and as such, is an integral aspect of the atmosphere. As is evident based upon the context of the

above scenario, the ultras' repertoire is highly flexible—contingent upon the politics of the moment and intertwining with the natural elements and physical characteristics of the space. Within the discursive context of atmosphere, the ultras' perceived audience exists on multiple planes—in the physical space, but also with an awareness of the Irish and international *ultra* scenes, which will see the group's choreographies online. Action, then, is influenced by multiple audiences and the cultural capital to be earned through transnational reputation. The almost instantaneous circulation of choreographies and crowd support not only offers new content, but spurs forward competitive innovation. In this way creativity earns groups cultural capital within the sphere of *ultra* discourse. While results on the pitch are important and play a role in influencing atmosphere, out-supporting your opposition is an arguably more important facet of being in an ultra group.

The competitive and discursive nature of atmosphere occurs within a context where authorities take punitive measures to prevent illegal acts from happening. In the aftermath of the game, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) fined Shamrock Rovers for the ultras' use of flares. As a result, the club began investigating the potential culprits, finding photos of the flares that had been posted to Facebook. One of the photos included myself standing next to Fiachra, who had his harm held out with a lit flare. Being able to identify Fiachra as a regular contact between the ultras and the administration, the club banned him for several games. Nevertheless, the ultras continued to light flares, arguing that the lowest degree of competency and responsibility made the use of flares a safe endeavor in the stadium. In order to protect themselves from future administrative action, however, the SRFC Ultras began blurring their faces in all subsequent media that they posted on the Internet. In Germany, strategies to circumvent these rules were even more intensive. Ultras wore balaclavas while

lighting pyrotechnics and changed clothes afterward in order to evade identification by the police. Constructing the spectacle of covert publicity, discourse was both a physical experience in public space and one that was later circulated online. In this way, insurgent subjectivities emerging from marginalizing experiences with authority developed into the discursive medium of a transnational movement oriented against modern football.

The Impact of Space on Atmosphere

Blurring the perceptible boundaries between public and private in ways that include its participants and alienate unenculturated onlookers, chants and graffiti act as a collective means of laying claim to Dublin between *ultra* groups. The fans' understandings of space are "both produced and transformed" by the social nature of performance (Born 2013, 19), and further, forge intimate connections to it (Fox 2004, Sakakeeny 2013). Taken one step further, sounding and geography act as cogenerative elements from which actors construct shared understandings of a place (Eisenberg 2015, Dorr 2018). As it relates to the Shamrock Rovers fan scene, the ultras' performative experiences cultivating atmosphere as a means of competition and conflict between groups influenced how they perceived and navigated the intimacies and dangers of varying neighborhoods and stadia throughout Dublin. In short, sounds articulate territories and their boundaries (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Contested spaces are affective pressure points. Conceived in relation to the bodies that inhabit it (Daughtry 2015, 189), the stadium is a fluctuating sociopolitical environment that is inflected by competing cultural narratives and collective memories, all of which serve to cultivate, reinforce and transform atmosphere on matchday. The yearly away trip to Dalymount Park [home of Bohemians FC] was exhilarating for the SRFC Ultras because of

the felt hostility of the space—that which was created by the physical proximity of Bohemians fans to the Shamrock Rovers contingent, the overwhelming sounds, and the tendencies of both home and away supporters to rush the pitch. Before my first game against Bohemians, I heard about Dalymount Park from my interlocutors as the match of the year—that which was defined by the exhilaration of hate and the potential for violence. “It’s programmed into you if you’re a Rovers fan of recent times that Bohemian FC are the number one enemy,” said Davy, explaining to me a rivalry I couldn’t yet understand.

“It’s like the Israelis and the Palestinians in a way. You know if you’re an Israeli that the Palestinians are going to fucking hate you—they’re going to hate your guts. Nobody’s done anything on me, but I still don’t like them as a club—the way they go on, the way they act, their colors. It’s mad how much I hate them. I can’t wear anything red and black because it just reminds me of them and it’s disgusting.”

Preexisting cultural narratives and collective memory inflect perception of space in ways that influence the emotive trajectory of atmosphere. It didn’t matter who Rovers were playing, the supporters on Block M sung about Bohemians and their neighborhood, Phibsborough, as hostile territory—but also as territory to be won. Rovers could be playing Galway and still someone would slowly belt out a line about Bohs—

*“IIIIII, was walking down Phibsborough one fine day”—before the rest joined in—
“when a Bohs cunt got in my way, kicked him in the bullocks but he got away. We are the SR-FC!”*

Phibsborough was sung about as a place that Rovers brazenly entered at their own risk. If you were looking for a fight in Phibsborough on derby day, you were sure to find one—or so Davy had told me. The ultras thrived on the risk of violence but didn’t tend to look for it. Instead, they leaned into the performative aspects that enhanced the conflict. Karl described

being forced into fights by Bohemians supporters who would ambush the public bus as it stopped in their neighborhood. Bohemians' stadium, Dalymount Park, was the focal point of the lore created and reinforced by Rovers supporters. "We call it Castle Grayskull because there is always this cloud of despair and rain," Eoghan said, laughing. "It could be forty degrees [Celsius] and it would be pissing rain at Dalymount." On gameday, nerves started to tingle, and group awareness began to heighten as we made the journey from the south of Dublin to the North for the game. The closer we get, the risk of attack increases. It was important to travel in numbers.

One of the oldest football grounds in Ireland, Dalymount Park was a gray, concrete, dilapidated mess. Guided by police, we are escorted through a concrete labyrinth covered in hastily painted graffiti until we reached the turnstiles a long way from the street. "With the police in Ireland, they treat you like fucking scum at Dalymount," Davy said. Congregating with the rest of the ultras at the far end of the terrace behind the goal, we were positioned as close as possible to the hardcore Bohemians support in the main stand, located just on the other side of the corner flag—*close enough to see the whites of their eyes*, I was told ahead of time. They wanted me to understand just how thin the line was between the two factions of supporters. Down at the bottom of the terrace nearest to the pitch, a sign is prominently placed on the metal fence that informs us it has been covered with "anti-climb" paint.

Proximity plays a defining role in enhancing the experience and stoking the atmosphere at the Dublin Derby. The sonic ecologies are so close that groups can hear and understand the chants being sung by the opposition supporters. When goals are scored, when crunching tackles are made and referees issue unjust calls, reactions in the other stand are both visible and audible. The crowd separated from us by a flimsy fence is so close you can

pick out individuals and view their reactions to the transpiring events. Hundreds of Bohs fans are wagging their fingers, flipping us off at any given time, and laughing at every misfortune. But Rovers score and the crowd erupts into a frenzy of total exuberance. From the TV, the crowd is writhing arrhythmically. On the terrace, the fans are jumping and screaming, moving over the broken and faded seats and rushing the fence to get as close as possible to the players field and the Bohs' supporters.

The riot police line the pitch, looking at us in disgust—but they seem scared. Bodies tensed, the blows they attempt to land upon supporters climbing the fence are done without confidence. Completely outnumbered, they are out of their depth. Collie has smudges on his jacket, forgetting in the moment about the paint on the fence. The boundaries between home and away fans that normally ensure a safe matchday experience are clearly permeable with some effort [and numbers]. As Rovers run up the score, a Bohs supporter runs onto the pitch to brazenly egg on the away contingent. The crowd feeds on the increasingly obvious lack of control, increasing the tension, hate, and potentiality between the two groups. As the goals continue to hit the back of the net, Shamrock Rovers are completely humiliating their rivals. Coursing with adrenaline and ecstasy, the Rovers contingent is in disbelief. Emotion, then, feeds back upon itself in the unfolding of the event. The interplay between the sonic, the visual, and the physical emplacement of subjects makes possible a diversity of atmospheric textures and gradients of affective intensity that construct emotionally heightened narratives and outcomes. The result is the construction of space into *place*—that which is experienced affectively in the sociopolitical context of the moment.

Competition between opposition *ultra* groups is a key driving force behind performative discourse and transnational belonging. In the cultivation of atmosphere, space

and collective action exist in relation to one another as physical touchstones in the production of cultural experience. The physical qualities of any given space, then, play a large role in intensifying or dampening affect. Dalymount Park, for Rovers fans, was more of a lair than a football ground—it was enemy territory—defined by risk associated with violence. This risk and the thin line that separated home and away support accelerated the atmosphere. As such, collective discourse is both impacted by and cultivated in consideration of the surrounding space, furthering cultural narratives in which the club and the group are embedded. In this context, preconceived hostile or alien territories can be contested or even converted into sites of public intimacy for insiders who identify with *ultra* as a performative style and ideological position. Through its strategic use, space is utilized toward *feeling* place as an interactive component of cultural experience and discourse, in effect changing the perceptual qualities of stadiums. Memory leaves fingerprints and shadows on places, even after the event has ended. Atmosphere is sticky.

From the Stadium onto the Streets

In the summer of 2017, I drove from Berlin to the Czech Republic to meet up with the SRFC Ultras before Shamrock Rovers' match against FK Mlada Boleslav in the Europa League qualifying matches—a prestigious international competition. Drinking beers with my former landlord—another Rovers fan—I waited for the ultras to arrive. Close to kickoff, I caught up with Neil, one of the newer members who I met two years prior in Norway at a match in Skien against Odds BK. Fiachra introduced us, and now it was Neil's turn to introduce me to a number of the younger members of the group who I had never met before. We watched our backs as we headed toward the away sector, moving past large apartment

blocks that lead toward the massive Skoda car factory in the distance. We're quickly patted down and make our way past the riot police into the segregated and fenced guest block. Stickers are not allowed in the ground, but the lads are able to smuggle them in. Neil hands me a bunch and we get to work slapping them on every metal surface.

Stickers come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the size of a Coke label, to others that are slim, but long. Matthew, one of the younger members, designed the current batch with an assortment of graphics. *SRFC Ultras - Block M*, is wrapped around a pole, *Pyro Mania*, *SRFC – Pride of Dublin*, and *On the Terrace*. The words are placed atop action shots of the group singing with fists raised. Others show the ultras with green flares and smoke on the terrace, faces obscured. The last sticker in the set showed a cartoonized version of Sal being dragged off by the police—depicting a real event in which he was caught after lighting pyrotechnics. **ACAB** was stamped in large, bold letters next to his figure—All Cops are Bastards—a recognizable acronym within *ultra* discourse.

All along the railings, there are stickers from recent ultra groups who have been to the stadium, which the lads cover with their own. But aside from plastering the away block with stickers (which the stewards will attempt to remove after the game), the ultras slap stickers all over the city—on street signs, bathroom walls, on buses. Matthew drew his own SRFC graffiti on DHL labels, sticking them on street signs around Dublin. Group stickers become fingerprints, cultivating cohesive and distinctive design aesthetics that become identifiable and unique to certain groups. But stickers are also referents to experience—they transport and activate *feelings* for those that are able to recognize them, and they are alien to those who cannot.

In this way, stickers address an audience much like the SRFC Ultras' vocal and physical performances, simultaneously directing itself in two directions at once—toward the insider and the public. In this way, stickers, as a part of the broader *ultra* style, operate on a plane of discourse (the implicit understanding between groups) and that which briefly enters into the consciousness of the general walker-by, or maybe doesn't at all. Importantly, Sal's ACAB sticker draws lines between public and counterpublic—between those who identify through experience and those that will be startled or concerned at the notion that “all cops are bastards.” Sal and a few of his friends began to develop and incorporate stickers after their visit to the Sankt Pauli neighborhood in Hamburg. In Sankt Pauli and the neighboring Schanzeviertel, everything metal—lampposts, mailboxes, doors—are covered in thick layers of overlapping stickers. The Ultras Sankt Pauli are particularly prolific in their development and use of stickers in the area surrounding the stadium. “Some people may do it from an artistic point of view because they like art, which is fair enough,” said Sal. “But the way I'd see it, is that it's getting Rovers' name out on the streets.”

While design and aesthetic were aspects of stickering that specific group members cultivated and the rest of the group approved, Sal's comment asserts the stickers' functionality as contesting and laying claim to territory. “We started it and then I think the first non-Rovers homemade sticker I saw was a St Pats sticker, which was made to cover one of our stickers,” Sal remembered. “And then after a while, Shels started making some really good homemade stickers as well. So it's all about laying claim to Dublin really.” Stickers sustain presence in physical absence, extending the discursive nature of performance outside the stadium and blending the liminality of the stadium into the streets. “If you're a Pats fan or a Bohs fan and you walk down O'Connell Street and you see Rovers stickers everywhere or

if you're from Spain and you see Shamrock Rovers stickers, you're going to think we're the biggest club in Ireland," said Sal. And he was right. In the group's ability to out-sticker, draw more support in the terraces, and develop innovative choreos, the SRFC Ultras were arguably the strongest group in Ireland, which helped earn them friendships with groups across the continent.

Collective action, then, is both discursive and multidirectional. As videos, photos, and the stickers circulate the Internet and enter public spaces, the lines between public and counterpublic are articulated, creating physical spaces "where oppositional identities, discourses, and practices are produced and through which they circulate" (Juris 2008, 201). Key to the ultras' overarching estrangement in the public sphere is their deviation from rational-critical forms of discourse—instead using inflammatory references to violence, illegal pyrotechnics, and graffiti—all of which ideologically grate against notions of common good and the assumed nature of stranger sociability in public spaces. This tension and public fear is integral to *ultra* subjectivity, creating a participant experience in which "the friction against the dominant public forces the poetic-expressive character of counterpublic discourse to become salient to consciousness" (Warner 2002b, 120). Access to *ultra* as a transnational counterpublic does not hinge on some sort of global camaraderie, but rather a shared experiential understanding that enables discourse between groups while simultaneously setting them apart from the larger and dominant public sphere.

Paradoxically, however, it is the localized process of collective action and cultural production [the collective experience of performance, the lack of identification with mainstream fandom, and social alienation] that connects the group to the diffuse and varying logics of *ultra*. Why is there a transnational identification with the term? Because the

connection goes unspoken, *running through the implicit domains of common experience. It is a shared understanding acquired through feeling.*

Fiachra and I are drinking tea in Temple Bar.

“So do you try to explain to people your interest in Rovers or is it not even worth it?”

I asked.

“The best way is to get them to come to a game. There’s some phrase about that...*if you get it you get it, and if you don’t, you don’t.*”

Conclusion

I have argued in Chapter 4 that social and affective experiences related to the appropriation of the *ultra* style of fan support initiated a shift that overtly rejected dominant cultural and commercial dimensions of Irish fandom, and Irishness at large. The group publicly embraced and expressed core anti-social tenets of *ultra* (such as the use of flares, that *All Cops are Bastards*, and a strong position “Against Modern Football”) with the knowledge that these performative acts and ideologies are scandalous, with no accessible foothold in the public sphere. In relation to atmosphere, the ultras utilized the physical attributes of space, architectural style, and discourse with opposition support in order to construct intimate relationships with community and place. In that the ultras have a lasting impact on the perspectives and subjectivities of participants and onlookers, memory and emotion are superimposed upon places, subverting the original intent of public space. Covert presence is a key to the full implementation of the full gamut of illegal tactics that one associates with *ultra*.

Specifically, the SRFC Ultras challenge the dynamism and flexibility of the public sphere as a space of discourse, and further, contest what forms of discourse and topical parameters are deemed valid in public space. Performance in this context exposes the ways in which social organization and collective action rub against the logics and values of the modern nation-state and notions of the public sphere as a template for discourse and collective agency within liberal democracy. It has been my aim to underline the ways in which crowds can function as a cohesive entity that blur notions of the individual, which is the foundation of the modern citizen as the building block of the nation-state.

The ultras social organization and mode of collective action—in direct contrast to normative logics of public space—relies heavily upon manipulating the affective dynamics of space with the specific intent of impacting future outcomes. The SRFC Ultras used performative aesthetics that reappropriated the stadium as a site of public address, at times even threatening the stranger sociability of public space and the rationality of text that defines modern discourse in the public sphere. In this way, *ultra* is a break with the perceived normative logics of public space and liberal democratic culture (Eisenberg 2013). The old Rovers chant—*We are Rovers, super Rovers, No one likes us, we don't care*—holds weight in contemporary circumstances. The SRFC Ultras embraced the aspects of their public behavior that set themselves apart as deviants.

Akin to Hardt and Negri's position that the continued momentum of transnational political movements rely on the affects of physical encounter (2012, 17), the tangibility of locality and community for the SRFC Ultras are intertwined with circulating discourse and performative aesthetics. Adoption and adaption of such aesthetics culminate in a transnational “we” that is forged out of overlapping collective experience relevant to the

ultra scene at large. Interaction between groups in Ireland was entangled with competitive aspects of being the best, pushing forward better choreographies and larger pyro shows, and earning respect more broadly from the global *ultra* scene. This competitive motivation provides the momentum that is key to the continued remediation and circulation of photos, videos, and interviews online, which now constitutes a sphere of global discourse around support in the arena. Further, these collective experiences cut across local contexts due to a shared practice of illegal performative tactics, varying degrees of police repression, and alienation from mainstream fandoms. This transnational identification as *ultra* was articulated and experienced through localized practice. Public intimacy, competitive rivalry and police repression are key aspects of experience that constitute the transnational identification with *ultra* that sets its participants apart in public like oil in water.

Interlude: You Call This Democracy?

Train doors open in the town of Rathenow and several hundred FC Saint Pauli supporters with open bottles of beer and lit cigarettes walk out, ready for an important German cup game in the summer of 2014. As the crowd exits through a tunnel that leads toward the street, riot police are waiting. One policeman begins filming the fans as his unit follows the crowd down the road. Somewhere within the group someone begins to chant, and immediately the crowd joins in. Chants—devotional and emotionally charged—erupt sporadically as the crowd moves down the road toward the stadium. Riot police in vans park outside the ground while others stand around in groups with their helmets in their hands. The active fan scene at Saint Pauli stands around drinking beers, overflowing onto the road and blocking the movement of police vans. The fans choose not to move for the traffic, which is forced to stop. The police, however, drive forward anyway, hitting the fans who are looking in the other direction, prompting sharp collective cries of protest from the crowd. Beer bottles fly and hit the van, and foam flies through the crack in the window onto the officer inside. Having left the door unlocked, several supporters pull the driver partially out of the vehicle—just to show what they could do—before they let him scramble back into his van with fear in his eyes. Atmosphere is tense, teetering on the brink of an affective explosion, as small provocations persist between the two sides.

The home team, FSV Optik Rathenow, has erected fencing around the visitor section specifically for the match against Saint Pauli. After we enter the stadium, the ultras sing and dance with the crowd. The police, more relaxed than before, watch the match and chat with one another. Supporters are caged inside the terrace, but this is common in Germany. After an unlikely win for Saint Pauli, tensions finally boil over on the trip home. As the crowd

sings and moves along the platform toward the idling train, one supporter veers toward the cops. With arms outraised, he shoves his face within an inch of a policeman's who remains in control and does not move—save for a look of disgust.

On the second leg of the journey, riot police enter the train. Asking supporters to move out of the stairwell, the police are met with no acknowledgement or response. Words are exchanged and suddenly a policeman begins viciously punching a fan. Supporters fight back and the brawl begins to bottleneck up the stairs of the two-tiered train car. Riot police come from both ends to quell the melee. I am stuck in between the converging mass of bodies. A cop in full body armor screams at me, but I am new and I can't understand him. I stare at him in disbelief until he shoves me into a nearby seat. At the other end of the train a man is being held by the police.

“You call this democracy?!” shouts a fan across the aisle. As the train pulls into Hamburg Central Station, supporters surround the police standing on the platform. The police remain resolutely expressionless as the supporters begin to chant, “All of Hamburg hates the police!” Performance and violence, then, can be interchangeable, serving similar purposes. Crowd action can replace physical violence through symbolic enactment (McDonald 2009, Jack 2013) but it can also work to actualize it, widening potentialities and creating atmospheres in which affect is amplified by the smallest actions.

It was not so surprising at the next FC Saint Pauli home match, that the ultras erected a choreography in the Südkurve depicting graphic police violence. The police were not pleased, imposing a ban on alcohol at the next match. The ultras, however, were not deterred, giving out free beer outside the south stand in response.

Part 3 – Deviant Subjectivities

FC Union Berlin

To modulate atmosphere is to change perceptions around the outcome of the event.

*Attention, attention! This is the police!
We have the area surrounded,
But we come in peace!
The police have made a lot of mistakes in the past,
We'd like to apologize for that.
Please come out of your positions...
We've really messed things up,
But we're only human!
Please come to our police van,
We have a present for you!*

-Die Toten Hosen

5 – Imagining Democracy

Taking the tram far into East Berlin, I hop off in Weißensee to head to the Bunte Kuh, a left-wing youth center, where Matze, Manu, and Rasty are playing a gig tonight. I initially met Manu through one of the social workers who worked specifically with the ultras at FC Union. He introduced us when he heard I was a researcher interested in music of the fan scene. We hit it off outside the Abseitsfalle [*The Offside Trap*—the bar that sits next to the train tracks along the woods. Manu seemed unsurprisingly cautious to expose me to his ultra group—Hammer Hearts—since I was relatively new to the scene and he didn’t yet know me well. Instead, he invited me to come hang out with him and his band at his rehearsal space in Lichtenberg, where I would listen to them play. All ultras, I sat around with Manu, Rasty, and Matze in the hall outside the cramped room talking about football, *ultra*, jobs, and video games for hours. The smell of smoke and the overlapping sounds of various bands practicing in their practice rooms that characterized the band’s social milieu and defined the regularity of this atmosphere.

Though not always overtly political in their music, MOFA found most of their gigs in left-wing social spaces, and tonight was no different. The Bunte Kuh is a location that you hear about through word of mouth—you would never see it from the dark street. It is a government funded youth center [Jugendzentrum], which sells itself on its website as “a club that represents the interests of government departments and agencies” (<http://buntekuh.blogspot.eu/>). But when I ask how the Bunte Kuh could foster an antifa scene as a government funded institution, people joke with me that the government must not know who they’re giving their money to.

Located at the back entrance of a tall, dark house in a quiet neighborhood, lights brighten the steps to an unassuming door. Once inside, stairs lead to a basement in which every inch of the walls are covered in graffiti. A bartender serves cheap bottles of beer from a fridge in a lounge next to an empty concrete room where bands perform on a regular basis. Given the Bunte Kuh's radical political affiliation, Matze tells me that you have to be careful talking to people you've never seen here before. Undercover cops are known to come to these hangouts, much like the terraces at FC Union, the football club that Manu and Rasty support. While in the same band, they are all members of different ultra groups that are in charge of creating atmosphere on the terrace of their respective sport clubs. When they are not performing on stage, they were most often with their respective groups—Manu with Hammer Hearts at FC Union, Rasty with Wühlesyndikat—the biggest ultra group at Union—and Matze with Black Corner. Ultras, then, became attuned to inhabiting social spaces in which covert surveillance was a constant specter, both real and imagined.

Manu stands at the center stage of the smoky room wearing a black shirt emblazoned with FCK CPS on it. Tattoos crawl up his arms—FC Union designs on one side, and music themes on the other. With the crowd warmed up, Rasty puts down his guitar and runs through the smoky basement with a blow-up baton and a stilted police cap, mockingly roughing up the crowd—many of whom have experienced real conflict with the police. People chuckle and some fight back before Rasty returns to his guitar and the ultras from FC Union who have come to support the band mosh in the center. The song continues and Manu sings:

“...stadium bans and prison visits hang over us like an endless curse...”

Both Manu and Rasty had been handed long stadium bans by the DFB, which were enforced by the police in the stadium. While Manu had served his sentence, Rasty was still not allowed in the stadium. Rasty offered his story while we drank beers at the rehearsal space.

“I was sentenced because of an injury to a police officer,” he said. But Manu jumped in—

“Don’t admit to that!” he said in a pedagogical moment. They all laughed.

“Allegedly,” Rasty corrected.

Entering through the main gate of the stadium in Bochum with a number of older Union fans, he was approached by the police because of his Wühlesyndikat scarf. With their batons out, an altercation ensued. “I had to drive to Bochum and I was sentenced there. The judge sat there like it was already lunch time and wasn’t in the mood to be there at all.” With cool efficiency, the judge issued Rasty a multi-year stadium ban and was forced to donate €1,000 to Amnesty International—“which is very funny,” he added, seeing an irony in the harsh and expensive punishment—“because Amnesty International stands up for human rights.” Aside from a disciplinary ban, the judge had imparted a moral dimension to his punishment, standing in as a forced act of recompense. He was also required to donate another €1,000 to a charity of his own choosing. Such encounters of conflict were unfortunately common, resulting in court dates and stadium bans for acts ranging from physical conflict to verbal altercations with police, which surprisingly resulted in similarly strict disciplinary measures.

As such, the public performances of anger, satire, resilience, and criticism by ultras like Rasty, Matze, and Manu reveal how identity develops in relation to their treatment as deviant subjects of the German state. In particular, the media work to disseminate this

construct, reporting violent conflicts between ultra groups and the police. Such encounters and their public circulation have spurred the increased in police presence and surveillance, but also the presence of government funded social workers assigned specifically to fan scenes, not-for-profit advice from lawyers to ultras, and even my own participant observation—all of which influenced socialization in the fan block and the political content of collective performance. It is the construct of The Deviant in the public sphere and the anxieties surrounding it that are reincorporated into the self-conceptions, world-views, and behaviors of the ultras at FC Union.

Introduction

This chapter looks at the ways in which ultras' populist logics of community organization, public expression, and collective determination come in conflict with the interests of the state and the DFB in the context of professional football. Because the fans have no role in electing DFB officials, the DFB's monopoly of power over league rules and policies violated the populist ethos of football as *Volkssport* [The People's Game]. The DFB prized commerce, public safety, and a culture of "fair play" that did not adequately accommodate broader (i.e. traditional) fandom on the terraces, in which the body is "the primary source of social memory and cultural reproduction" (Robson 2000, 70). Ongoing tension between ultras, the DFB, and the state revealed contrasting expectations around the agentic capacities and behavioral parameters of football fans in public space.

Separated entirely from DFB policy-making, collective organization and decision-making also played out on the terrace. As organized collectives that invested the highest degree of time in the club, Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts had a disproportionate

amount of influence, making the terrace behind the goal a meritocratic space in which standards of behavior and styles of collective expression were largely determined by the ultras on the terrace behind the goal called the Waldseite [The Forest End]. The circulation of discourse was also a key aspect of crowd organization and collective action. Aside from crowd participation, the ultras also distributed a newsletter on the terrace before games, giving an opportunity for contributors to voice their opinions about issues relevant to the team and the fans. Fans could also buy club membership to FC Union Berlin, which gave them voting rights regarding the club's policies at annual meetings. Additionally, the ultras, much like Black Corner at EHC Dynamo, used direct democracy to make all of the group's decisions. Oriented toward the narratives and experiences of the broader fan base, the ultras' performative style was oriented toward achieving maximum participation on the terrace, meaning that content needed to address themes that were salient to the broader FC Union fan base. Unlike the DFB's policies and vision of fandom, I argue that crowd performativity enacted *Volkssport* because it was perceived as a democratic form of assembly and collective action.

The ultras collective organization and style of performance in the arena is a radical enactment of *Volkssport* that aims to retain traditional fan practice in the stadium by protesting and actively disregarding their national governing body's policies, ideologies, and legitimacy as an institution. Publicly critiquing the DFB (and occasionally the police) all the while using illegal pyrotechnics at matches, the ultras became controversial bearers of "fan culture" that were simultaneously viewed by the state, the DFB, and even many spectators at FC Union as problem fans. At the heart of this friction are the ways in which differing claims to moral authority motivate and legitimize the actions of both ultras and the government, thus

holding them simultaneously in perpetual conflict and relation to one another. In this context, the ultras used atmosphere as a medium of public and political expression that worked in place of democratic representation in the context of football fandom.

A Populist Atmosphere at FC Union

FC Union has a reputation as a cult club in Germany because it has successfully retained many aspects of traditional spectatorship while the majority of Bundesliga football clubs have changed their stadium experience in order to maximize revenue. At FC Union, the club administration was unique in their willingness to disregard such strategies in order to preserve a traditional atmosphere, which branded the team internationally as a cult club that preserved an authentic fan experience. Kennedy and Kennedy argue that “the impulses toward tradition and community asset, on the one hand, and business, on the other, run up against each other to the point where neither impulse finds full development” (2016, 31). Football clubs—even FC Union—exist as both a community asset and a business, feeding each other’s existence. Neither can be purely realized without the other.

Exemplifying this ongoing tension, FC Union retained the stadium’s original name—Stadion an der Alten Försterei [The Stadium at the Old Forester’s House]—rather than replace it with a sponsor. Further, the club administration in conjunction with the fans planned and built a stadium that kept the majority of the terrace for standing-only instead of installing seats. As the site of the club’s football ground for almost 100 years, the location also embodied a great deal of historical significance. Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts used this to their advantage, working to create an atmosphere that preserved traditional values of fandom and the salience of place that were already integral to the fan community’s

identification with the football club. Consistent attendance and crowd participation promoted matrices of action and feeling on the terrace, which reinforced the conviction that the fans are the Verein.

Importantly, then, the ultras' curation of atmosphere in the stadium was not only geared toward their own specific ideological positionality as ultras, but rather toward broader cultural narratives that underscored the experiences and historical narratives of the collective imaginary. This is what I mean by *populist*—that crowd action at FC Union is geared toward the values of a larger community that extends outside the ultras' corner of the stadium. I reiterate this to show the ways that *the ultras' populist orientation toward participation and democratic methods of collective action are key to establishing moral authority when critiquing and rejecting authority in and around the stadium space.*

The Contemporary Salience of the Traditionsverein

FC Union is a relatively non-competitive, second division football club that asserts its authenticity by fostering and selling a traditional fan experience. Berlin for many football fans has one professional football team—Hertha Berlin—located in the West of the city at the massive Olympiastadion in the suburbs. Many football fans that I knew were surprised and ultimately confused to find that I had come from the United States to go to FC Union Berlin—a club playing in the second division with a quarter of the fans of Hertha across the city, and no on-field success to speak of. But FC Union had received significant attention from YouTube pages and social media sites because of the club's unique history and fan culture that seemed to have preserved a fan experience that held on to *the way things used to be*. This fascination and respect extended past Berlin or even Germany. I had in fact, found

out about the club while watching *Sausages and Caviar*—a page narrated by two young British men who go groundhopping across Europe, visiting different football stadia and focusing on fan culture along the way. FC Union, as I saw it portrayed, was for many an archetype of how the fan experience could be—with an implied nod towards the way things used to be.

Located on the outskirts of Berlin in the district of Köpenick, FC Union and the Alte Försterei resided in an area that was almost entirely unfrequented by the rapidly growing contingent of young internationals that were gentrifying more central neighborhoods such as Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Friedrichshain. The surface rail that supporters took ran past gardens, forests, and FC Union graffiti on the concrete infrastructure and bridges before reaching Köpenick, what was once its own city that was integrated into the Berlin city limits in 1920. Previously a site of industrial production, Köpenick was intensely beautiful, with rivers, fields, lakes, and greenery that were stripped away from the central areas of Berlin. It was now also the site of prolonged urban decay, in which many factories and other buildings from the era of the GDR continued to slowly fall apart—where youths sat on the roofs, drinking beer and looking out over the River Spree and graffiti artists slowly sprayed the walls. Before that, Köpenick was where the ironworkers worked, and is the origin of the team's nickname, the *Schlosserjungs* (metalworker boys). FCU graffiti and stickers peppered the buildings, signposts, and even the trams and trains around the area of the city where the fans traveled.

Union had arguably favored a fan-centric stadium experience over strategies that might have yielded greater on-field success. The club's setup was particularly fetishized by British football fans, who in the UK had lost standing terraces due to safety concerns and the

more profitable all-seater stadium format. FC Union Berlin attracted around 20,000 spectators to the Stadion an der Alte Försterei. Unlike the Olympic Stadium in the west of Berlin, the Alte Försterei was built specifically for football. Standing terraces were constructed snugly around the pitch on three sides, creating an intimate atmosphere in which the majority of the crowd stood tightly packed together to watch the match. The fourth side of the pitch was the only one with any seats at all. Most stadiums in Germany were majority seated, but designed to accommodate a standing terrace behind the goal. In this way, FC Union was notable for prizing a tradition of spectatorship that was becoming increasingly marginalized across Germany and Europe as demand for tickets and the competitive need for revenue went up.

Before arriving, I watched Christian Arbeit on *Sausage and Caviar*, the long-haired stadium announcer and press officer, mimic Union's critics: "Are you nuts? Don't you know you earn much more on seats than standing terraces?"

"—Yeah of course we know," he said switching back to his normal voice. "But we just don't wanna have it. We want to have fun here, so we built it like we wanted it." As a product, fan culture was linked with a spectating experience that emphasized an intimate collective environment inextricably linked with the standing terrace. Much like Shamrock Rovers, the salience of community was connected to the historical narrative of its fans and experienced in the present through its recreation in the atmosphere behind the goal. Standing terrace is so critical because it enables socialization through movement and collective performativity in the stadium, which seating does not. In essence, standing terrace increases the potential for community building while widening the affective possibilities in the stadium.

On matchday, fans in red scarves cram onto the S3 light-rail at Ostkreuz headed toward Köpenick. Walking back along the tracks down a narrow residential street, one finds most Unioners at the Abseitsfalle (The Offside Trap), a small bar packed and spilling out the door with regulars to the Alte Försterei. It's the kind of bar where you ask for "Bier"—but not a specific kind—because you are always returned a Berliner Pilsener for €2.50. Every match we congregated there. Across the narrow street, the ultras sold stickers, Fanzines, and occasionally t-shirts—this was where I met a number of my interlocutors for the first time. It was here that multiple generations of Union fans mingled before and after the match. It was here that some of the fans with stadium bans watched the game after everyone else had headed through the woods toward the Alte Försterei.

Attending matches month after month, most of the ultras that I became closest with were seasoned members. In their mid to late twenties, they were more mature in their mindset. Manu, in Hammer Hearts, saw himself as no longer "active" within the ultra scene, meaning that he placed equal priority on his band with Matze and Rasty than making it to every away game. Vico and Kernchen, however, were still deeply involved in primary decision-making. Their words and advice held weight with the younger members, who Vico commented were sometimes too quick to respond to inflammatory tactics from the police or injustice from the DFB. Vico and Kernchen were still in the stadium because they understood the scene, they understood how the police functioned, and they were able to negotiate their roles within this context and guide others. Ali, the capo, always stood out. Good looking, often serious, and with piercing eyes, he moved between many groups of people before matches. Lots of people knew him—he was one of the few fans, or ultras—that lived in the West. Coming to Union since he was fourteen, his commitment, dedication, and prioritization

of the club above all else overcame any doubts about his upbringing in the West. Everyone, not just the ultras, came together at the Abseitsfalle.

Next to the bar, a wooded path leads through the forest to the Alte Försterei, which opens into a clearing lit by floodlights where vendors sell cheap bratwurst and beer. At my first ever match, I was late, racing along the path toward the stadium entrance as a voice began to speak over the loudspeaker.

*Back when the perseverance shown by the metalworkers
in Oberschöneweide reached immeasurable levels...*

*A legend was born. It came alive.
And it will never, ever be forgotten.
EISERN UNION! [Iron Union]*

The team's hymn begins to play to a melody that is strikingly similar to the Soviet anthem. East German punk singer, Nina Hagen, screams the lyrics and the stadium roars, singing along with thousands of scarves raised above their heads. One line stands out above the rest amongst the tightly packed crowd. Fans raise their fists, no longer singing, but shouting—

*Who won't be bought by the West?
EISERN UNION! EISERN UNION!*

FC Union was founded in 1966 in East Germany. Fans proudly called themselves a *Traditionsverein*, loosely defined as a club with “history”—that which separated them from “plastic clubs” that were only recently founded and often accompanied by the financial backing (and thus the lopsided control) of one corporate sponsor (for instance, Bayer Leverkusen, VfL Wolfsburg, or RB Leipzig who were controlled ostensibly by Bayer, Volkswagen, and Red Bull respectively). The fans at FC Union saw the club as part of a line of previous clubs that played in the area starting in 1906, and that found its home at the Alte

Försterei in Köpenick starting in 1920. “Tradition” and “history” held cultural capital in the context of contemporary football fandom because it authenticated the fanbase as a longstanding communal institution in the city. Participating in the *DDR Oberliga* [East Germany’s top league] before the merging of East and West Germany, the fan base and the ultras drew pride from the historical narratives drawn by the fans and the ways in which FC Union became synonymous for Köpenick as a community identifier.

“There are older people that don’t have anything to do with Union, but it’s clear even for them that in Berlin there is only one club,” said Kernchen. “And that’s the mentality of Köpenickers.” Once its own city, Kernchen noted that in many ways Köpenick was its own island with a separate history apart from that of Berlin. While most of the ultras gravitated towards FC Union because they lived in the East, a number of them even moved to Köpenick because the social life of the group was there—making banners, flags, or hanging out. Köpenick—virtually invisible in the broader Berlin imaginary—was the focal point in which social life occurred at FC Union, merging social belonging with place. In the collective imaginary, atmosphere often worked to merge outside areas of Köpenick with the proceedings inside the Alte Försterei. Always working on choreographies and hanging out before and after matches in Köpenick, the ultras painted their own imagery on the terrace through song:

*Hey FC Union storm out the gates!
You’re at home in the southeast of Berlin.
Between grasslands and forests, meadows and lakes,
Oh Köpenick, you’re beautiful!*

Expressions of love in the stadium, then, were rooted in an experiential realm of historical reimagining and the reenactment of local collective imaginaries and its attachment to place.

Feeding History into Atmosphere

FC Union Berlin had gained an international reputation as a “cult club,” which had successfully retained a community ethos and a number of unique traditions that set them apart from the increasingly globalized fan communities of Europe’s elite football clubs. Focusing on the experiences of the fans rather than the team’s 100+ years of competition, FC Union focused on the historical salience of community. Football fandom was reproduced as a community-based social practice that connected the collective imaginary to a cogent historical narrative around the GDR and East Berlin. Preserving a distinctive local atmosphere in conjunction with a compelling cultural narrative allowed FC Union to offer an alternative stadium experience in lieu of a high-quality level of play on the field.

FC Union’s story was intertwined with a historical narrative around East Berlin and the GDR. I was told how families in Köpenick still knew which of their neighbors had been informants for the Stasi (East German secret police) decades earlier. This antagonistic relationship with the Stasi manifested not only in day-to-day life, but came to the fore in the team’s competitive encounters. Many media narratives portrayed FC Union as the anti-authoritarian football club during the GDR era, where dissidents to the communist regime could voice their discontent. In the 1980’s, FC Union’s greatest rival was BFC Dynamo—the sponsored football club of the Stasi. BFC Dynamo was highly decorated in the communist GDR, winning ten championships with the help of doping and match fixing, before completely falling off the competitive map after the fall of the Berlin Wall. FC Union had historically been second best to BFC Dynamo and had no pedigree of competitive success throughout their history, but the team was slowly improving each year. Most of the ultras that

had been going for the last ten years had seen their team slowly rise out of amateur football into the higher divisions of the professional league. With their rise, the stadium grew, and the attendance levels rose from several thousand into the sold-out stadium of 21,000 that it was today.

In the 1990's, the fans built the current stadium because the club couldn't afford to pay workers to renovate the old one. Clocking hundreds of thousands of man-hours, the Alte Försterei became the standing testament to a narrative that merged an abstracted communal love with manual labor. But devotion and contribution also took on other symbolic *Aktionen*, including a blood drive, named *Blood for Union*, to raise funds for the club to pay the 1.46 million euro licensing fee that allowed participation in the German fourth division in 2004. Unlike the history of many football clubs, which would revolve around trophies and on-field success, the historical narrative of FC Union centered upon the history of the fans and the surrounding community instead of the players.

Outsiders loved Union Berlin because the media underscored the romance of a lost fan experience that harkened back to the origins of professional football where one could stand, drink cheap beer, and smoke on the terrace without reprisal. Collie from the SRFC Ultras took his friend Sean to Union Berlin to show him an alternative to the English Premiership, which dominated TV spectatorship and fandom in Ireland. Tickets at Union Berlin were between twelve and twenty euros—an unbelievably cheap cost in comparison to the ticket prices of the larger clubs in Europe. FC Union was in demand and people were willing to pay for an intimate atmosphere that relied on standing terrace culture and an active crowd.

At my first ever match in 2014, FC Union's opponent Nuremburg scored again and again. As the game developed into a blowout, no fans left or even complained. Instead, the ultras sang louder, and more fans began to join in from farther and farther away. Competitive success was not part of FC Union's history, and it wasn't the first priority of the fan base either. This commitment to spiritual perseverance in spite of competitive irrelevance was a key aspect of the community ethos and the ultras' style of support—a distinction that separated lower division clubs like FC Union Berlin from more financially powerful clubs with higher ticket prices and histories of competitive success.

Discrepant Imaginings of Fandom

Even with a club administration that sought to preserve a more traditional style of fandom at the Alte Försterei, the ultras (unlike the administration) were overtly non-compliant with the rules set by police and the DFB. For most ultras, commerce was deemed to be a direct threat to the preservation of tradition and fan culture. What the ultras saw as traditional fan practices, then, existed in perpetual conflict with the DFB's fiscal strategies to increase the clubs' revenue and enhance athletic competition on the field. Particularly wary of rising ticket prices, heightened advertising in the stadium, the replacement of standing terraces with seats, and workweek matchdays meant to maximize TV revenue, the ultras noted how the commercial priorities of the league challenged the existence of traditional fan practice and thus weakened the capacity of the fans to assemble and organize. Most of the hardcore support that stood at the Waldseite would prefer to remain in the lower divisions if it meant sacrificing the intimate atmosphere that had been cultivated by the fans and the administration at FC Union.

Crowd action took on democratic overtones as a discursive form of assembly that represented *Volkssport*. Collective agency, adequate representation, and self-actualization were prized aspects of collective expression within the fan scene. And while Carlos Forment describes the ways in which the social structure of Argentinian football club Boca Juniors became an optimistic model *of* and *for* democratic municipal government (2006), the ultras at FC Union found that their expressive potential and collective agency were inhibited by policies and regulations put in place by various apparatuses of governance that impeded their ability actualize their vision of fandom at FC Union. While crowd action is often invoked as a representation of democratic fan practice and *Volkssport* at large, fans are entirely severed from any official representation within the DFB and have no role in formalized processes of decision-making.

Furthermore, performative behavior on the terrace often came in conflict with the DFB's standards of sportsmanship and fair play. These standards of sporting behavior became stringent parameters of expressive control when applied to collective action in the stadium, which often enacted intensive rivalries and engaged in provocative critical discourse. The DFB's philosophy was rooted in a bourgeois ethos that conduct learned through sport could be applied to one's daily life (Bourdieu 1978)—that which has been standardized by football's international governing body, FIFA, with a campaign entitled "Fair Play, Fair Life." Similarly, the DFB's concept of fandom and participation was idealistically geared towards "those who do not get so carried away by the game as to forget that it *is* a game..." (ibid, 824). In this way, tension over the parameters of expression between ultras and the DFB is representative of the rift in ideology surrounding modern

fandom—on the one hand as a casual leisure activity, on the other as *Lebensinhalt* [one’s purpose in life].

In relation to the DFB’s financial interests and broader conception of fandom, the ultras’ concept the *Verein*—that the fans *are* the club—became a radical claim to collective determination that the DFB refused to acknowledge. Support became a collective mode of asserting an alternative construction of fandom that at times proudly disregarded the DFB’s rules, most often through pyrotechnics and inflammatory banners criticizing DFB policy. Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts also claimed moral authority to defend their actions based upon alternative ideology forged out of marginalizing experiences with authority. The notion of “tradition” and further of football as *Volkssport* is prized—most commonly and colloquially expressed that *football without fans is nothing*. Before I arrived in 2015, Wühlesyndikat presented a series of Spruchbänder that reflected and expanded upon this ideal:

The Fans’ Highest Purpose is Co-Determination
[Das höchste Gut der Fans ist die Mitbestimmung]

Behind it, smaller Spruchbänder were raised.

Voice
Fan Involvement in Club Committees
Stadium Participation
Creative Leeway
Freedom of Publication
Respectful Communication
Assembly for Club Members

While a democratic implementation of fan organization was possible to varying degrees between the fans and the club administration, who was uncommonly considerate of

overarching fan values and concerns, such communication between ultras and the DFB was impossible.

Further complicating the relationship between fans and the capacity for collective determination, the club administration was beholden to the DFB as a participating member of the Bundesliga because the league enforced rules, policies, and regulations through fines to the football clubs. This created a tension between the club administration's interest in following the rules and complying with the interests of the fanbase. Largely uncommon amongst most professional football clubs around Germany, the club administration at FC Union was reasonable in listening to the ultras' various requests and concerns, which helped to preserve the intimate and distinctive atmosphere at the Alte Försterei.

Strongly categorized as non-compliant, the ultras were seen as the most problematic set of fans for the DFB and the police. As a result, they were seen as "bad fans" by the DFB and sometimes even by other Unioners, as Ali explained to me. This made fan practice in the stadium a contentious subject.

"Many people go to Union, they drink beer, they hang out with their friends, take photos for Facebook, and then they go home," he said. These moments of ideological conflict that Ali expressed were indicative of the underlying *ultra* mentality—being at the game was about participation and collective engagement. If traditional fandoms center upon standing spectatorship, consistent attendance, and an identification with the collective imaginary, I argue that the *ultra* mentality is a form of crowd action and expression that is radical in its insistence on upholding and performing these romanticized notions *of what fandom may never have been but was always supposed to be*. In this context, *ultra* is a performative and ideological disposition that experientially activates and enhances the salient notions of

traditional fandom through its engagement with the historical narratives of the football club and its intimate relationship with place—The Alte Försterei and the district of Köpenick. Between the influence of the DFB and the ultras on the Waldseite behind the goal, the hegemony of participatory fandom created an epistemological tension that pulled spectators in opposite directions at The Alte Försterei.

Coordinating Bodies, Cultivating Atmosphere

At the Waldseite during the match, it was clear that the ultras were in charge—not the police or the DFB. Under the performative directives of the ultras, the capos, Fabian and Ali, reached out to all the supporters on pedestals facing the terraces, shouting and encouraging supporters to sing and keep the atmosphere high. Participation was integral to entrance into the active fan scene (those that sang and traveled with the ultras). Climbing the stairs is sonically overwhelming. Fans begin to congregate an hour before the match, chatting as they settle into their normal locations. Ali and Fabian coordinate with one another, leading the chants. Both have megaphones that are hooked up to a PA system, which is directed toward the fans and extends the entire width of the Waldseite.

“A megaphone can’t reach everyone,” Ali said. “So if we want everyone to participate, then everyone has to be able to hear” (Personal Interview 2017). While the ultras thrived on the intensity of the atmosphere, many of my friends could not physically enjoy standing between the drums on the terrace due to the high decibel levels. The Forest End is an all standing terrace, fitting several thousand spectators. Wühlesyndikat is easy to spot—most dressed in black rain shells, standing in the center of the terrace behind a banner that reads “Sektion Stadionverbot,” in solidarity with the members who have stadium bans. A

white flag waves with the same title, next to the silhouette of an ultra watching the match from behind a locked gate. Ali was revered by the ultras at FC Union as one of the best capos in Germany. I could see why—leading chants took a sixth sense. With one eye on the game and another on the crowd, Ali judged the atmosphere, the demeanor of the participants, and the proceedings on the pitch when picking chants. Months later, I asked him what it took to galvanize the crowd.

“Fire and anger,” he said. “You have to have the right feeling. You must have the feeling that fits the song and you need to exude that feeling.” Harnessing affect necessitates an understanding of the politics of the moment and the accompanying feelings that prompt its attunement.

* * *

In November 2015, the ultras were preparing a choreography for the club’s fiftieth anniversary. Unlike most of Wühlesyndikat’s choreos, which were made in secret (in part to protect themselves from ambush from other ultra groups), the group invited all Unioners to help.

Sitting amongst three generations of fans, we sat in the stadium making flags several days before the club’s 50th anniversary match, working together to put the finishing touches on a choreography that had cost over €20,000, with hand-sewn crowd covers that would extend across the entire stadium. Painted atop was a timeline demarcating the club’s most significant moments—underscoring the permanence of history upon the present.

We Had Highs and Many Lows—What’s Done is Done—But Victories and Scars Last Forever

The club's narrative was predominantly a history of its fans, and as a result was an essential component of the *ultra* experience at FC Union. The ultras' choreographies and songs connected the young generation of hardcore supporters with the previous by honoring and recreating a shared historical experience. Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts, then, channeled the shared inter-generational values of the fan base into the *ultra* style of performance, which demanded a lifestyle in which free time was centered around hanging out with the group and working on new choreographies.

The *ultra* scene at FC Union embraced the shared narratives of the broader fan scene, but took those ideals and historical narratives to a lived extreme through lifestyle and performative aesthetic. Requiring brainstorming, design, months of menial work in the warehouse, and implementation on gameday, The 50th Anniversary Choreography underscored the lifestyle required to pull off such an *Aktion*. "Ultras are like a parallel society," Manu described. "That's just the way it is. The people that are really in it, they don't have much of a connection with the real world, except that maybe they work. In any case, they have no real points of commonality with [mainstream] society. *Ultra* is really a parallel society" (Personal Interview 2016). This notion of *Lebensinhalt* was intimately connected with how the ultras forged their lifestyles. The painstaking and time-consuming nature of the 50th anniversary choreography was a physical testament to the lifestyle—that which mixed artistry, collective decision-making, the drudgery of manual labor, and the collective attention it requires. Union subsumes one's life, directing one's actions and priorities. Life balance or not, Union becomes an irreplaceable aspect of living for such public and social intimacy.

Chants and atmosphere channeled the feeling the lifestyle evoked. Julius—one of the older ultras in Wühlesyndikat—penned a song that encapsulated the salience of Union’s role, though it was sung quite rarely. He had already moved to Chile when I arrived in Berlin, but his fingerprint was on so many of the songs that the crowd sang at the Alte Försterei. In fact, I heard it for the first time a year and a half after beginning to follow the team.

“It’s a love song,” said Kernchen. Having modified the lyrics from the widely used *ultra* melody “Dale Cavase,” Kernchen played a Latin rhythm to the tune.

*Father was born in prison,
Mother lies ill in bed.
Sister became a whore,
All alone, what should I do in this world?*

*Union, Union above all else,
Germany’s immortal team.
Because Union will never crumble,
Eisern Union from Berlin.*

The crowd sang the melody and bounced on the terrace in between iterations. Kernchen spoke about the man in the song—“Union will never die and never leave him,” he said (Personal Correspondence 2017). “Many of the older fans don’t like it. The song is messy and hard, exactly how life can be hard and messy.” But it captured the intimacy, sociality, publicity, and intensity with which Union captures the life trajectories of the ultras. Life is nothing without Union, but Union also offers salvation from life. Union subsumes life, while life subsumes Union. In this way, performance portrayed and distilled the salience of daily practice.

“From 17-22 years old, all the time and every place that I went was for Union, be it during the week at the warehouse or on the weekend in the stadium,” said Julius. “So it’s

only natural that when you're constantly thinking about Union, that the chants will come as well" (Personal Correspondence 2016). For Julius, there was an equivalency with the music and the lifestyle—an inherent connection to the creativity that was required to create a *vibe*, or to recreate the experience of lifestyle that expanded past the results on the pitch.

On the day of the match, we arrived at the Alte Försterei early in the morning to lay out the thousands of feet of painted material and to receive instruction on how to direct the rest of the fans to lift the crowd covers and to make sure the *Aktion* would be carried out smoothly. As Nina Hagen sings and the players walk out onto the pitch, the choreography goes up without a hitch, covering the entire stadium for only a couple of minutes before it is brought back down—never to be used again. In the second half, a small crowd cover rose again, but this time select members have on balaclavas and are holding marine flares. With the crowd cover up, the police surveilling the terraces can't identify who is smuggling or using pyrotechnics. Kernchen gets off the metal pedestal, making room for masked participants to hop on, waving flares. Others from the group ran along the gangway, encircling the entire standing terrace. As the multitude of flares are lit in close proximity and the smoke rises to the roofs covering the terraces, the bright orange light and the smoke reflect off of each other—the terrace looks as if it were on fire.

After the match is over, Kernchen is promptly arrested for lighting flares. Because he had drummed on the podium where the flares were lit, the police thought he could be the culprit. "I was totally relaxed when they accused me because I knew there was a video recording and it would show 100% that it was not me. But that shows nonetheless—when everyone knows you, you're more vulnerable" (Personal Interview 2016). The police were always there, watching. Utilizing different tactics of surveillance, the police watched and

waited until they could most effectively weaken the groups and make arrests. More than purely bureaucratic or mechanistic, ultras perceived police tactics as being aimed at group morale, impacting the atmosphere in the ground.

“If they gave someone like Ali a stadium ban, then the group would really feel their power,” Kernchen said.

Conclusions

Ultra at FC Union is a contemporary re-imagining, and preservation of traditional spectator-based fandoms that is enacted through a transnational aesthetic and ethos of support—that which represents the collective agency of community before sport was alienated by professionalization and commercialization of modern football. It is from this position that tradition and history are essential components of the collective imaginary at FC Union Berlin. Preserving FC Union’s historical narrative through the cultivation of atmosphere was in essence, a way of remembering the history of its fans and their ongoing relationship with the district of Köpenick and the Alte Försterei. The salience of crowd action, in turn, preserved and reanimated the style of fandom that once was and was always supposed to be. I have argued that the ultras at FC Union are experts in modulating atmosphere and in so doing, *cultivating and coordinating affective dispositions that stand in for the absence of structured representation in the context of football fandom*. It is a move that in the abstract transcends the limitations of the situation through a symbolic recreation of *Volkssport*. It is the cultural capital and affective power of the ultras that garner their collective influence on the terrace in spite of their radical ideological position in opposition to the state and the DFB.

Performance and socialization on the terrace consolidated a deeply invested fan base that was willing to protest and break the law in order to preserve a style of fandom that they perceived to be increasingly under threat. The collective organization and solidarity of the fan scene gave the ultras the capacity to establish the behavioral standard at the Waldseite as an affective-discursive space modeled around crowd action. In lieu of any dialogue with the DFB, crowd action on the terrace served as a replacement for any formal democratic representation, all the while consolidating the ideological outlook and organizational capacity of the crowd, making ultras and the ultra-oriented fans collectively impossible to eliminate from the stadium. By utilizing crowd action as a stand-in for The People, the ultras strategically claimed moral authority over various governing apparatuses such as the police and the DFB. In this way, Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts were non-compliant and heavily critical of the threat that the DFB posed to traditional fan practice and subjectivity. The ultras bore contradictory labels as authentic bearers of fan culture and as problem fans. As a result, the affective potential of the crowd—its participants' capacity to publicly protest and break the league rules and state law—became an ongoing source of anxiety for the government and the media at large.

6 - Affective Governance

In 2012, the German federal police were conducting a demonstration for the press on the dangers of pyrotechnics. Aiming to impress upon the reporters the risk to injury, photographers lined up and recorded as the police lit marine flares to show the bodily harm that pyrotechnics posed in the stadium. The press published photos in of various officers burning flares through sweatshirts, arguing that a marine flare can burn through the muscle to the bone on a human leg. Firecrackers are lit within a pig foot. The photos track the gory details—the before and after—of the full foot, and then the blasted meat, charred by gunpowder. The officer, with a stern face, demonstrates how marine flares do not extinguish in water, but continue to burn. The *Westfälische Rundschau* reports how flares pose a life-threatening danger to civilians and “peaceful” fans, and that use of flares are on the rise (Winkelsträter 2012). *WAZ* reports from the same press conference that marine flares burn up to 2000 degrees and can burn through clothes and muscle up to the bone (Richter 2012). The flame from a marine flare, they demonstrate, can’t be extinguished in water or sand. The reports present quotes from the police on the risk of bodily harm and statistics to underscore the prevalence of pyrotechnics at football matches. It is here that police strategy frames the morality of state action against ultras in defense of the public.

Introduction

Due to the ultras’ dominant presence and influence at the Alte Försterei, the presence of the state became an inseparable aspect of being an ultra. Numerous governing bodies influenced the social life of the hardcore fans in an attempt to manage delinquency and misconduct of fans in public space. Such tactics are legitimized by a concern for public

safety with goals of prevention—and if prevention fails, then the *preemption* of violence by the state—a term that denotes “acting on the time before: the time of threat, before it has emerged as a clear and present danger” (Massumi 2015b, 2). In the context of the stadium space and the diversity of external interests in the social aspects of fandom and deviancy, the state can be conceived “as extending far beyond its formal frontiers to include a host of institutional sites, discursive genres, and political technologies that propagate its effects through the social,” with the aim of seeking to “orchestrate, induce, and defuse a set of indispensable yet potentially inflammable affective dispositions” (Shoshan 2016, 16-17). Through the intervention of the state into the lifeworlds of ultras, I argue that the techniques of governance work to produce atmospheres of paranoia where “threat becomes spectral” (Goodman 2010, 71) in public space in and around the arena, creating tension and reproducing violence in public space. Governance in this context is imbued with its own capacity for creative destruction, reproducing the specter of deviancy through its myriad tactics of management.

The ultras thus find themselves engaged in a struggle over the parameters of appropriate public expression and the politics of their performative content. The punishments—in the form of arrests, fines, stadium bans, state surveillance, and games held behind closed doors—were laughably ineffective, reproducing an anger and defiance in ultras that only further entrenched *ultra* groups like Wühlesyndikat in their divergent ideological positions. Tactics of governance at football matches actively contribute to the *production* of a tangible threat, creating a type of conflict that the state is best equipped to confront with the resources at its disposal (Massumi 2015b). The management of the ultras’ affective labor reflects complicated, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory strategies of governance that

aim to establish security, predictability, social accessibility, and customer compliance—all essential components of the modern sporting event. In looking at the variety of strategies taken by various governing bodies, I challenge the notion that the management of the ultras is simply motivated by public safety and the prevention of violence.

The overarching threat that ultras pose is not simply one of potential violence, but rather pertains to their ability to cultivate atmosphere with the goal of influencing mood and action in ways that extend far past the realm of the “ordinary” (Stewart 2007). What garners such drastic time and resources from government is the very fact that ultras’ collective action is organized and takes place in public. The struggle between government and ultras extends past issues of “the legitimate body and the legitimate use of the body” (Robson 2000, 4), and into the realm of affective potential. Power [and thus, *threat*], then, is rooted in the ultras’ ability to harness public affects and the vital dynamics of the crowd, coordinating large numbers of participants in public spaces. The subsequent encounters between structures of governance and ultras have set in motion processes of strategic interaction, adaption, and mutual transformation in relation to one another (Hardt and Negri 2009, 68). As such, *ultra* exists in a constitutive interrelationship with the multiplicitous and entangled processes of governance in the public sphere. With this in mind, I examine the relationship between affect, governance and subjectivity in moments of encounter, and further, the role of affect in challenging and reproducing power relations (Massumi 2015a).

These tense encounters fed back into the subjectivities of the ultras at FC Union. In this light, the numerous attempts to repress and control the ultras behaviors in turn produce what I call The Deviant in the public imaginary and further radicalize the ideologies and worldviews of the ultras that the state seeks to extinguish. Specifically, ultras strategically

operationalize mood—modulating atmosphere to underscore this ideology through collective presence, creating ecologies of shared experience that exist outside of conventional debate or negotiation. As a result, ultras utilize collective performance to articulate alternative subjectivities and perspectives in ways that momentarily transcend the myriad strategies of governance that they live with on a daily basis. It can be further utilized to shift emotional possibilities and alter the spectrum of action in moments of encounter. To cultivate atmosphere is to alter emotive perception around the outcome of scenarios as they unfold.

War in Köpenick

In Germany, football has become a site of ongoing tension between ultras and the state. Due to the consistent treatment of ultras as delinquents by the courts, the police, and the DFB, the cultural imaginaries of hardcore fans have developed in sharp opposition to the police. The militarization and sheer buildup of security forces in the context of football in addition to the state's long-term tactics of surveillance of football fans has created a cold war between ultras and the police in Germany. This ambience of perpetual tension coupled with the occasional outbreak of physical violence between ultras and riot police feeds into scholarship that has argued war is used as a tool to maintain the social order *within* nations rather than between them (Hardt and Negri 2004, Appadurai 2006). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue specifically that traditional notions of war are no longer relevant in contemporary society. Instead, war has changed toward the militarization of the police in conjunction with attempted eradication of social and metaphorical enemies from “within” (The War on Drugs, The War on Poverty, etc), blurring the boundaries between warfare and governance.

When wars are conducted to maintain social order, there is no longer a distinguishable beginning or end, making warfare immersive and ongoing (2004, 14). While police violence was an intermittent aspect of life at FC Union, *covert* action against the ultras was an ongoing reality of lived experience. Aimed at the active fan scene, police strategy revolved around the acquisition of information in the form of profiles and databases. These compilations of data manifested in spectral ways within the fan scene in strategic moments of performative intimidation by police, giving the state a spectral kind of ability. These public manifestations of the police's knowledge work to "spatialize the state" in ways that perform an all-encompassing presence, underscoring authority (Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

Yet in ways that worked past the ultras' antagonistic experiences with the police, there actually existed a variety of governing apparatuses that sought to influence behavior and alter outcomes in relation to the *ultra* scene, ranging from non-profit youth organizations, national and international sporting bodies, and even social workers. Drawing from Michel Foucault's conceptualization of "governmentality," ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have pointed out the myriad organizational bodies extending outside the formal boundaries of the state apparatus, which employ varied strategies aimed at rationalizing the conduct of its citizens (Guilbault 2006, Tochka 2006, Dean [1999] 2010). In this regard, the state is not monolithic, but diverse in organization and philosophy. Governance in this context consists of an "oligarchy of diverse political and economic bodies, including corporations, continental and regional alliances,"—which exists as a highly pluralistic form of regulation (Hardt and Negri 2009, 226). In the context of professional football, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), the German Football Association (DFB), and the Bundesliga expend tremendous energy advocating for a secure

stadium experience that will streamline the professional sporting event. Increasingly, this coincides with financially beneficial alterations to the professional event, such as minimizing space for standing terraces and expanding opportunities for advertisement and service-based leisure within the stadium space (Kennedy and Kennedy 2016, 97).

Histories of conflict between police and supporters in Germany result in preemptive attempts by the local government to contain and control coordinated activities of the crowd by stationing riot police at the grounds (Honigstein 2012). Citing public safety as a primary concern, managing ultras activities functions through various forms of governance that do not necessarily work in tandem, but from many strategic angles. Nitzan Shoshan asserts that “the policing of shifting political frontiers fuses today with the governance of emergent social peripheries” and has “set in motion novel modes of governing populations—especially at the bottom end of social polarization” (2016, 6). The management of the ultras’ affective labor reflects complicated, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory strategies of governance that aim to establish security, predictability, social accessibility, and customer compliance--all essential components of the professional sporting event. The logics of governance in the context of football deal in risk, orienting present tactics toward *futures*. This allows organizations and governing bodies to justify action based on potentialities based in fear (Massumi 2015b).

Neoliberal governance, then, does not appear as a massive and coherent entity with a singular strategy, but rather is enacted through a diverse set of actions and tactics that aim to establish compliance and predictable behavior at the sporting event. As it emerges in moments of encounter, Nitzan Shoshan argues that governance in its multiplicitous forms seeks to induce and defuse affects that are deemed potentially inflammable (Shoshan 2016,

17). Yet prevailing logics of neoliberal governance, which stress individual empowerment toward autonomy in the context of societal-economic contribution (Gupta and Ferguson 2002, Harvey 2005, Foucault 2008) are ill equipped to handle leisure contexts in which individual compliancy is prized as essential to collective consumption of the match. Behaviors that upset the streamlined and predictable mechanism of the event can disrupt the desired ambience of the sporting narrative, creating anxieties surrounding the enactment of the liberal democratic subject in public spaces.

The media also plays a key role in allowing diverse governing bodies to justify their strategies and punitive measures against “problem fans.” In this sense, mass mediation and circulation do not necessarily reflect popular sentiment, but produce it (McDonald 2012). Further, scholarship has shown the ways in which contemporary news journalism has adapted to a capitalist format, spectacularizing violence in ways that are meant to capture attention and often serve to mobilize viewer support in favor of state sanctioned force (Deaville 2012). This critique of media’s prioritization of the capitalist bottom-line and its coziness with the state is not new. Herman and Chomsky argued that corporate-owned journalism serves to reinforce institutional interests and opinions (1988), making violence a story that automatically constitutes news because it challenges the stranger sociability of public space and the public sphere at large (Göle 2005). The product of such anxieties of governance and media circulation—The Deviant—is anonymous and many, stoking anxieties surrounding dissolution of the rationalized individual in the sanctity of public space. Importantly, then, the enemy being targeted by the state is not only elusive, but entirely abstract (Hardt and Negri 2004, 30).

The Deviant, I argue, is constructed out of varied attempts to manage, rehabilitate, and extinguish it from the public sphere. As such, the ultra becomes the object of the state's moral source of legitimacy as it extends itself into the fan scene and impacts social life. Assemblages of governance aim to influence outcomes, yet it is the inherent lack of predictability on matchday—the anxiety around what *might* happen—that sets in motion government tactics to manage the hardcore supporters at FC Union. Yet the failure of governance to eradicate the perceived problem of ultras in many ways serves to legitimize more intensive and invasive measures in the public sphere in order to solve it. Tactics of governance taken by organizations like the DFB—such as stadium bans, games played without any fans [*Geisterspiele*], and the utilization of riot police and state surveillance—are heavy handed and imprecise, painting potential deviants with a broad brush. This means that the logics of governance often work to cultivate scenarios in which fans and ultras are deemed and treated as potential criminals before any incidents have occurred. In turn, ultras internalize this status, using their repression to justify illegal action and overt criticism of police and the DFB in public space.

The Efforts to Achieve Public Safety

In this section, I argue that the DFB's efforts to govern the content and form of collective expression in the arena not only brought to the surface the highly divergent priorities of ultras and the German football governing body, but also reinforced ultras' perception that hardcore fans were the true placeholders of "fan culture" in German football. This was most immediately apparent in the controversy surrounding the use of marine flares in the stadium, in which the DFB's proposed interest in public safety ran up against the

symbolic and expressive importance of pyrotechnics for ultras. While a number of ultra groups across Germany had worked together to create a united campaign called “Pyrotechnics are not a crime! Legalize Pyrotechnics! Respect Emotions!” the DFB ended dialogue in 2011, stating that burning pyrotechnics did not meet fire safety standards (DFB.de 2011). Upon the grounds that their highest priority was the safety of all spectators, the DFB argued that sanctioning pyrotechnics for use by fan groups was not feasible in the context of professional sport because it risked “life and limb” (ibid). The DFB also cited the preexisting bans on pyrotechnics by the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) as well as the global governing body, FIFA. To support their decision, UEFA published a study investigating the health and safety issues pertaining to unsanctioned use of pyrotechnics in stadia (Smith 2016). In collaboration with a number of health and safety experts, the study outlined the long list of potential harm that pyrotechnics could inflict on self and others, from burns to flesh and clothing, explosive threat to bodies and structures, the acute and chronic effects of smoke on the body, hearing damage, and the potential for crowd panic. As a result, pyrotechnics in Germany—like almost every other country in the world—remained completely banned in spite of the campaign for its legalization.

Soon after, the DFB also released the results of a survey (which they had organized) that revealed 84.4% of German football fans agreed pyrotechnics should be banned in the stadium, which implicitly justified the DFB’s decision by showcasing the agreement of football fans across Germany. But the survey questions were heavily biased in ways to garner a specific response in favor of the DFB’s policies. Journalistic sources argued that the DFB was using the survey to justify its decision to end dialogue over pyrotechnics (11Freunde 2017, Vice Sports 2017). This critique of the DFB was begun after an independent study by a

bachelor student revealed a broader diversity of fan opinions surrounding the use, safety implications, and cultural significance of marine flares at football matches (Schwatzgelb 2017). For those paying attention to the discrepancies between the surveys, the intentions and honesty of the DFB were called further into question. For ultras on the terrace, policy determined by the DFB was completely out of touch with the priorities and values of “real” fans. One of the most immediate policies that impacted the ultras at FC Union was the scheduling of weekday matches, which prioritized TV broadcasting agreements (and TV spectators) over the hardcore fans who traveled home and away to all the matches. On a Tuesday night, most of the ultras were forced to take a vacation day from work, or just go into work the next day without any sleep.

It was this kind of decision-making around revenue and TV spectatorship that allowed the ultras to justify the illegal use of pyrotechnics. Flares in part became a public rebellion against the DFB and the rules. The ultras at FC Union were well aware that some of the older fans at FC Union didn’t approve of pyrotechnics because the fines from the DFB financially hurt the club. In Dublin, Shamrock Rovers even released a public statement requesting that fans reduce misconduct on the terrace because they could not afford to divert funds to paying the fines from the FAI. But as “real” fans, the ultras could claim moral authority to breaking rules that did not serve the popular interests of German fans. Resultantly, the DFB relied in part on punitive measures against football fans that were intended to repress and prevent illicit and illegal fan activity. Issuing a statement for a national news report on ZDF called *Portrait of the Enemy: Ultras* that underlined their approach to ultras. “Not just prevention is needed, but also repressive strategies...Only with

preventative measures are we able to stop fan misconduct” (2016). It was unclear, however, how effective—if at all—these preventative measures were.

Instead, repression became a defining feature of *ultra* subjectivity and a measure of legitimacy in the global scene. While many ultra groups had been interested in reaching some sort of compromise with the DFB, other groups had no interest in negotiation from the start. The Hansa Rostock Supras made their philosophy clear with an epic choreography that filled the terraces with smoke. Beneath the pyrotechnics, a banner read—*Legal, Illegal, We Don't Give a Shit! [Legal, Illegal, Scheißegal!]* Without clear control on fan activity in the stadia, the DFB was motivated to develop policies and regulations that would set stricter punishments (and as a result, give the league a tighter grip on the teams) in order to better create a proposal called “The Safe Stadium Experience” in 2012. But many of the suggestions within the proposal were strikingly coercive in their attempt to get clubs to follow to comply with regulations that would, in theory, create an orderly stadium experience. For instance, the DFB would be able to dock by 10% the ticket allocation for clubs whose fans violated any rules during travel to away games (Kicker 2012). In addition, banner and flag privileges for (ultra) groups who violated league rules could be taken away. Adding a strong financial incentive to toe the DFB line, clubs that violated security policies would be docked part (or potentially all) of their allocation of TV revenue. Rewarding compliance, club penalties for any behavioral violations could be lightened if the club officials were active in their search for the culprits. On the terraces, the DFB would raise funding by 50% toward fan projects (such as Gangway) at every club. Indicative of the close relationship between the club and the fans, FC Union was the only team in the Bundesliga that refused to agree to the “Safe Stadium Experience” without the consent of its fan base.

Working in conjunction with the police and attempting to increase clubs' motivation to enforce the league's rules regarding fan misconduct, the DFB exerted their influence in order to repress illegal activity in the stadium that they argued threatened the public safety of all spectators. The increasingly stringent parameters of control were justified by a claim to moral authority in place of any fan representatives within the DFB. As such, two competing hegemonies of cultural interpretation around fandom thus existed in conflict with one another in the stadium space. "The DFB wants 'clean' football," said Ali (Personal Interview 2017). "They want families at football. Everyone drinks Coca Cola, everyone drinks beer, and everyone is quiet." In this narrative, collective action is replaced by a culture of consumption and compliance. For Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts, breaking the rules in such public fashion was not a compelling moral dilemma because the DFB was seen as corrupt and illegitimate.

Managing Performative Content

The football association also policed the content of chants and banners, fining clubs, banning spectators, and closing entire sectors of the stadium for behavior deemed "slanderous" or "defamatory" (DFB.de 2017). The chair of the DFB Kontrollausschuss, Dr. Anton Nachreiner, compared such expressive content in banners and chants to be the equivalent of pyrotechnics, both of which were perceived as "grave misconduct" in the eyes of the DFB (ibid). In this way, conflict between ultras and the DFB emerged from *the way* that arguably legitimate critique was delivered in the stadium—through provocative use of performative techniques such as chants and *Spruchbänder*. As per league rules, the content of banners and even flags are to be approved before entry into the stadium, but the ultras were

often able to sneak them in anyway because of staff at the stadium looking the other way. FC Union did not bend over backwards to enforce these rules, so the ultras were able to bring banners and flags that they wanted to display in the stadium. At away games it was much harder—the ultras had to indicate ahead of time the content of the Spruchband. For Vico, Spruchbänder were the most important medium of critical commentary because they showed up in pictures taken by the media, unlike chants. Wühlesyndikat hung a banner protesting weekday matches to make clear their dissatisfaction with the league's prioritization of TV revenue.

“You can be sure there will be press agents and probably they will take at least one picture of our section,” Vico argued. “So that's one rhetorical device—to put this banner in front of the section because this way they just can't ignore it” (Personal Interview 2017). But in many cases, performative strategy was not really about jumpstarting discourse, since no one ever expected to get a meeting with the DFB over their disagreements. Instead, the goal of Spruchbänder was often geared toward eliciting affect.

During a match against Eintracht Frankfurt in 2012 at the Alte Försterei, all traveling fans from Frankfurt had been banned by the DFB. “Frankfurt [fans] had used pyrotechnics or there was a clash [at a previous match], and so they were banned,” said Vico (Personal Interview 2017). Such sweeping repressive measures from the DFB punished all the fans, even those who were not guilty offenders.

“And we said that we don't agree with this,” Vico said. Despite the ban, the Frankfurt ultras bought tickets in the home supporter sector of the stadium and climbed over the fencing into away terrace.

“We were supporting them to go for it,” Vico said. “Take it, it should be yours. That’s the area where you should be right now.” In the tenth minute, Wühlesyndikat raised a huge Spruchband that read:

FUCK YOU, DFB!

“Sometimes you’re at a loss for words,” Vico said. “There was no need to make a rhyme or to develop cool lyrics [for this Spruchband]—that was all we had to say about that. I guess that’s when we showed it, to show them *we are powerful and you can’t break us.*” I asked Vico if the club got fined for the banner.

“I actually don’t know if we got a fine for it...but I think so,” he said with a laugh. “We have shown it at least three times up till now and yeah, I’m pretty sure one of these times it led to a fine.” From their position on the terrace, there wasn’t always a clear rhyme or reason that clarified how the DFB enforced the rules. But other incidents regarding controversial Spruchbänder resulted not only in fines to the club, but in a closing of the terrace to fans as a sweeping punishment. At a later date, Wühlesyndikat also took it upon themselves to comment upon the punitive action taken by the DFB over the content of banners in the arena:

*The Rhetorical Device of the Fan Curve:
The Last Unpredictable Element in the Bundesliga Circus!*

Wühlesyndikat’s banner concisely pointed out the DFB’s monopoly of power juxtaposed with their inability to silence an implied voice of the people. This could be seen as a small victory in which the ultras got the final word. But we must return to the end of Vico’s story, because it points to the broader ramifications of remediation after the initial act of protest.

Pointing to the aftermath, Vico showed the type of attention the event received in the media. He noted the ways in which stories veer out of the actors' control, and the unequal nature of their representation in the public sphere.

“So the entire stadium agreed, ‘yeah ok the Frankfurt supporters are in the stadium’, and they also agreed that we want the opponent in the away section [rather than banned from the ground]. But one newspaper printed a picture of the Frankfurt fans climbing over the fences and titled it with a description—Frankfurt supporters ‘storm’ the Union section, which was totally wrong. It just wasn’t true” (Personal Interview 2017).

In this way, interpretation is flexible when re-presented through the lens of the media. Crowd action is an unwieldy interpretive device. The circulatory power of the media proves more influential in recreating events, and more importantly, reinforces a broader frame of interpretation that re-replaces moral authority in the hands of the state and the DFB in the mediated public sphere. This trend allows the state to justify intensive measures against potential deviants at professional football in Germany.

The Spectral Presence of the State

A couple of weeks after my arrival in Berlin, I sat in a youth center in the southeast district of Köpenick a few days after my first match at FC Union. A lawyer was leading an information session and Q&A for ultras, explaining to them their rights in various scenarios with police, even acting out situations with role-playing. Working for an organization called *Eiserne Hilfe*, the lawyer moved through a spectrum of scenarios, from basic requests by the police for identification to more extreme situations like house raids. Next to me sat several social workers who worked for the government funded non-profit, Project Gangway. They worked solely with the active fan scene [ultras and those who want to be in an ultra group] at

FC Union, offering an extra set of hands when the ultras needed it, and giving advice to the younger guys when they sought it out. The event was occurring in the wake of a bizarre incident in which undercover police dressed as opposing supporters were exposed in the home block of FC Union (Faszination Fankurve 2015), but FC Union in fact had a heritage of being surveilled by the state all the way back to the communist GDR (Luther 2015, 50). Considering the number of incidents that occurred between ultras and the state (I was told about 10% of ultras at FC Union had stadium bans), *Eiserne Hilfe* worked to equip the fans with basic knowledge on how to best conduct themselves in the presence of police. One goal of *Eiserne Hilfe* was to help the active fan scene to know the law in order to best use it to their advantage in moments with the police. This was a necessity in consideration of the tactics that the police used to weaken the social cohesions of the fans at FC Union.

While many of the DFB's strategies were geared toward prevention and social repression, other approaches—especially from the police—were physically geared towards the *preemption* of future illegal activities that immersed itself in the social environments of the ultras in and around the stadium. Most overt, the high presence of riot police standing at attention often created an ambience of tension and combustibility that was not there before their arrival. In consideration of the ultras' ability to coordinate crowd activity and ideology in conjunction with prior histories of violence, the affects of crowd action created ecologies of fear in which “threat becomes spectral” (Goodman 2010, 71). Goodman argues that ecologies of fear entail measures of governance that work to “actualize the future in the present” even though the future event need not necessarily occur (ibid). Massumi takes this strategic aspect of state governance one step further, arguing that intervention recreates atmospheres of encounter that *facilitate* illicit outcomes that the state best knows how to

manage with the resources and tactics at its disposal (2015b). Concerning ultras, however, the strategies by football governing bodies, the police, and government funded social workers all varied in philosophy and practice in the ways that they attempted to influence futures outcomes.

The ultras were highly aware of the numerous ways in which the state inserted itself into the life of the active fan scene at FC Union. The implementation of riot police and a variety of techniques of surveillance added an undercurrent of animosity to the atmosphere at matches, making the ongoing conflict a perpetual dimension of social life within the active fan scene. Most overt in their contribution to the matchday spectacle, trails of flashing vans lined the streets, full of riot police dressed in body armor, helmets, and balaclavas. Armed with pepper spray and guns, the riot police conducted the manual labor of physically separating opposing fans from each other, in addition to filming them in order to collect personal information and catch illicit activity during games. But the overt and aggressive demeanor of the riot police were only one of the numerous ways in which an assemblage of governing apparatuses entered themselves into the social space of the arena. Additionally, it was common knowledge that *Zivis* (or, the civil police) were at home and away games in the fan section wearing plain clothes in order to understand how the ultras thought and organized. Having occurred in other fan scenes, even DNA tests and blood sampling were investigative techniques that the police used not only to prove criminal activity, but could also be legitimized by police on the seemingly vague grounds of “imminent danger” (Ludwig, Poppe, and Ruf 2016). As repressive and preemptive tactics are increasingly justified by a “state of exception” that gives the state increasingly intrusive powers over its citizens (Agamben 2005), this intervention played a significant role in shaping the social

environment (Hardt and Negri 2004, 20) in and around the stadium space, influencing affective responses of its inhabitants, and cultivating atmospheres in which tension, excitement, and fear mingled together.

At *Eiserne Hilfe*'s informational meeting for active fans, the lawyers handed out pamphlets to all attendees that explained how to manage a variety of interactions with the police. "Never talk with the police, and definitely not with the Zivis," the lawyer with *Eiserne Hilfe* advised. "They will be friendly, sympathetic, and helpful. But don't kid yourself, they aren't your friends! It's their job to create profiles on you and your environment out of [seemingly] unimportant details." This information is compiled and can be accessed by law enforcement, and it can supposedly be shared between different departments.

"They know us better than we know each other," Kernchen mentioned to me (Personal Interview 2016). "We are the bedrock of their careers. They observe what the fans look like, learn what they care about, how they organize—the whole story. They are so prepared that they have photos of unwitting individuals." Kernchen explained that the Zivis take this information in order for the police to make informed decisions on when to make arrests and how to place pressure on the ultras in different ways.

"As an example," Kernchen continued, "We had an away game in Wuppertal [a different region of the country]. I was carrying the drum and one of the Zivis thought there could be something in the drum so he said 'hold on'. I naturally kept moving with the drum—but then he addressed me by my first and last name. It was clear that he knew exactly who I was. They take notes and write reports. They look at photos, use video footage, and other information. They will use everything they can—even talk with other Unioners."

Not only were fans being surveilled intensively within the fan scene, but information and data were also distributed nationwide in ways that eerily manifested in moments of encounter on the streets and in the stadium. Distrust and the levels to which the ultras needed to filter the content of their activities within the scene was also a significant factor. Socialization in the fan block, then, was deeply impacted by the awareness that small and mundane details had value to people who wanted to harm the coherence of the ultra scene. Filtering the content of one's conversations in the stadium, and even on the fan scene bus, became naturalized aspects of mundane interaction. So defensive behavior was a necessity because it reduced negative potentialities between the ultras and the police.

“Is it hard to trust people inside the fan scene?” I asked Kernchen.

“It's important that one shows he can be trusted,” he said carefully. In other words, trust was built very slowly over time—something that the social workers echoed as we were jointly giving a tour of the stadium to a group of American college students. Showing that one cared about the active fan scene was not earned through singular gestures—or participation for that matter—but through habitual acts and persistent presence. It was telling then, that the fanzine at Sal's scene in Münster was called *Omerta*—the mafia code of silence and refusal to engage with authorities.

The danger and anxiety stoked by the ultras' ability to mobilize large numbers also attracted federal attention. Aside from regional databases, there also existed a national database called the *Datei Gewalttäter Sport [The Violent Criminal Offender Database]*, with over ten thousand individuals across Germany compiled within it (Rast 2018). But ultras are not told if they are on it, leading to an atmosphere of speculation and paranoia about the information the state has on any particular person in the fan scene. And one need not have

committed a violent offence to be put in the database, but could be potentially placed on the list for being associated with individuals who had. With this in mind, most of the ultras from Black Corner, Wühlesyndikat, and Hammer Hearts had had their information taken by the police for various reasons (though not arrested) or they intimately knew individuals who had been arrested by law enforcement at protests or football. Based on all of these factors, the status of every ultra and individual involved in the active fan scene was unclear.

“Do you have any suspicions that you’re in it?” I asked Sal, who after moving from Dublin to Germany, had become involved in the *ultra* scene in Münster. He laughed.

“It depends how paranoid I feel on a certain day. They have my ID. I’ve had my ID taken more than once in connection to football. I’ve been next to things happening many, many times, and that’s apparently all they need—that qualifies you.” In this way, the possibility of surveillance lingered in the background for most ultras, actively creating atmospheres of uncertainty that extended beyond the context of football and into the realm of the everyday. House searches were not unheard of and had happened to ultras at FC Union before, as Kernchen mentioned to me during our interview. Surveillance, then, did not often create an overt response or rebellion from Wühlesyndikat or Hammer Hearts. Instead, this undercurrent subtly shifted mentalities toward authority and worked to create environments in which the social dynamics were highly insular and protective. My point in depicting atmospheres of surveillance is to portray a certain low-grade ambience of paranoia created by an uncertainty toward the intentions of strangers. Because social life was lived under the ambience of immersive conflict, the ultras at FC Union enacted a similar policy of insularity in day-to-day encounters.

Advice and Support

In contrast to the governing strategies of the DFB or the police, the social workers from Project Gangway offered a human-centric approach to the management of conflict as it related to shaping future outcomes. All fully professional clubs in Germany were required to have the support of a team of social workers such as Project Gangway. Different from social workers in the United States, the team at Project Gangway conducted “street work,” meaning that they went to youths in the context of their day-to-day social lives. Working with young men and women from ages fourteen to twenty-five, Project Gangway had a full-time team that concentrated their attention on the active fan scene at FC Union. Project Gangway was my first entrance into the fan scene, initially mediating between myself and the two ultra groups, and later recommending specific contacts that they thought would be helpful to my research interests. As a seasoned member of the team, Anna became my primary contact. Unlike the work of social workers in the United States, the job of workers like Anna was to integrate themselves into the social environments of the ultras as much as possible and provide situational help based on what the circumstances required. “All of the games are our first contact point because they are all always there, or driving to the away games for example,” Anna said. “Those are the most important sites where we meet the adolescents.”

“So why are these sites the most important?” I asked.

“Because they are always there. This is where their *Lebensinhalt* is.”

In its application, this also meant driving the ultras to the soccer hall and helping organize group trips, which helped the social workers earn the trust of the ultras over time and engage with individuals about problems at home or with the police. Project Gangway

facilitated and gently managed the social lives of the ultras in ways that they hoped would steer them out of trouble with authorities.

“We try to recognize atmosphere beforehand and give advice about what could happen,” said Anna, referring to the ultras and ultraorientert fans.

“So your group isn’t really inside the atmosphere?” I asked.

“Exactly. We are the observers on the margins when something happens, when someone needs help, or wants advice.” The social workers, then, looked to manage future outcomes, considering the best ways to work within the ultras’ social spheres while learning and respecting the values of the young men they were surrounded by. While the civil police utilized the human component of deviancy as a weapon with which to dismantle cultural production, the social workers used such information from the position of benevolent outsidership, delicately working to guide the decision-making of the newer members as they became rooted deeper and deeper in the social life of the fan scene and the club.

Because of their working relationship with the ultras, the social workers took on the role of mediating between the fans and the police, since no self-respecting ultra group would communicate with them, Sal told me. Project Gangway convened with club officials and police at security briefings before matches, and as a result was familiar with the local officers. But these relationships were at times strained because of the differing priorities between the two groups. Anna and the rest of the team at Project Gangway made explicitly clear that they were advocates for the youth in the stadium, which the police did not always immediately accept.

“Sometimes that makes it hard to work with the police because, naturally, they want information,” said Anna. “That’s their job. They would like to know many things that we

know. We are always saying ‘I can’t tell you that’ or ‘I can’t talk about that’. Some of them are a bit offended by that but you have to hold out. We’re not informants for the police.” Yet any public familiarity between the police and the social workers was seen as a liability because it damaged the credibility of the social workers in the eyes of the ultras. “The policemen and women that know us realize on game day not to come over and shake hands and make small talk,” Anna said. “That doesn’t happen.”

As advocates for the active fan scene, the social workers at Project Gangway were afforded an advisory role in the logistical planning of gameday, but ultimately had conflicting goals from the police despite their willingness to communicate and work with them. While they knew the police, the league rules, and the behaviors of the ultras at FC Union, the change that they were able to mediate between the groups was ultimately marginal, in part because they held no decision-making authority. Navigating both sides of the glass, between official meetings and the social life of the terrace, influence was earned through the slow building of trust. The value and impact of their advice, then, was contingent upon the belief that social workers were advocates for the ultras. For this reason, Project Gangway’s mediation with the police had to appear adversarial, regardless of any sympathies they might have held for the individuals working for the police. Despite their ability to cohabitate the overlapping spaces of organization and governance, Project Gangway and the police had two conflicting operational tactics—one of prevention, and one of preemption that fell along radically different lines of how they conceived of ultras as public citizens. These divergent tactics emphasized ultras, on one hand as delinquents, and on the other as high-risk youth.

A Public Kind of Social Insularity

My own entrance into the field revealed the paradoxical nature of the community as one that was heavily closed off yet demanded intensive participation. As a researcher with an affiliation to a university, I entered the scene with even higher degrees of baggage than the normal fan because my role left me as yet another authority figure with a perceptibly nebulous interest in the fan scene. The social workers at Project Gangway looked at me sympathetically as a colleague in a parallel field with a soft spot for the ultras. We could also relate to the ways in which the ultras dealt with us—ever so slowly letting us into the social life of the fan scene.

For newcomers, it was easy to join the umbrella group for the *ultraorientiert* [ultra oriented], called *Szene Köpenick*, but it was exceedingly difficult to gain entry into Wühlesyndikat or Hammer Hearts. Entry into *Szene Köpenick* afforded a yearly membership fee, which offered its members access to an online forum where most travel information for away games was posted. Organized by Wühlesyndikat, *Szene Köpenick* was a way to involve and corral together FC Union fans who were in their teens or twenties with an interest in *ultra*. But after entering *Szene Köpenick*, becoming a member of an ultra group normally took years. Wühlesyndikat had their own *ultra* “youth group” called *Teen Spirit Köpenick*, which was a group that that developed and fed members into Wühlesyndikat—though not everyone who was in *Teen Spirit Köpenick* made it into Wühlesyndikat. Hammer Hearts, on the other hand, selected individuals on a provisional basis, after which the group decided if the trial member fit well into the group. It took up to two years to be invited to the warehouse where the groups worked on choreographies.

Upon my arrival in Berlin, I approached several ultras to let them know who I was and ask for permission to ride the bus with them to away games, to which they agreed. But this did not stop multiple fans—including Ali—from approaching me after the fact to reconfirm whom I spoke with and that I was permitted to be there. One fringe member of the fan scene was never convinced that I was who I said I was, confronting me months into my fieldwork to ask me what division of the police I was working for.

But *Wühlesyndikat*, and the *ultraorientiert* were generally not concerned about this, though they were very careful to understand the angle and scope of my project before I began conducting interviews. The group requested that I submit to them a description of my project in order to discuss whether my presence and request for interviews would be allowed. One of the more seasoned ultras that I met at the first game vouched for my personal affinity to FC Union, and the group collectively agreed that my research interests in “police repression” and “atmosphere” would not be problematic for them or the fan scene. While this approval earned me the right to stand on the terrace with the ultras and to travel with them on away trips, this was only the beginning phase of my entry into a highly insular and defensive community. My presence was accepted, but not actively welcomed and no one felt obliged to show me the ropes. Even Manu, who was friendly to me outside of the football context, seemed careful to limit our interactions around other members of his group. After about six months of going to games and riding the bus, Manu introduced me to one of the veteran members of Hammer Hearts.

“This is Max,” Manu said. “He’s a really cool guy!” His friend rolled his eyes and sighed at Manu, looking to remove himself. Getting to know individuals within the *ultra*

groups was slow—no one that I encountered desired attention or credit from me. It was a point of pride to be closed off.

“You don’t brag and you don’t bullshit and you don’t talk on the Internet,” Sal commented about the ultra scene in Germany. “You just don’t talk unless you really trust someone or unless they’re on the same level. It’s part of the whole fetish” (Personal Interview 2017).

Sal thought my relative acceptance over time into the fan scene was both surprising and impressive given the insularity of ultras in Germany. Considering their controversial reputation in the public sphere, I was enthusiastic about portraying the perspectives of a group that had very little representation and were constantly confused as hooligans. I had hoped for a scenario in which most ultras would see my presence as a mutually beneficial relationship. However, there came a time when I realized this was not, nor would it ever be the case. Most of the ultras—with Wühlesyndikat or Hammer Hearts—were generally unconcerned with earning ultras a better reputation in the broader community. Those I interviewed seemed primarily to be willing “to help me out” or “do me a favor.” Though it was a point of pride when the ultras’ choreos made it onto any of the number of *ultra* related Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and fan culture web sites, journalistic stories held little capital. What would be the point in trying to explain *ultra* to a broader audience?

“The people don’t understand us,” Ali remarked, arguing that explanation was a useless endeavor. I realized, then, that my utility as a researcher was very low for the ultras, and further, my outsidership and position of authority as a doctoral student at a research institution made me a risk to them. I was high risk and could offer little in return to them that they would value. My own acceptance into the fan scene with much caution was indicative of

how the ultras at FC Union conceived of attendance and participation, which was about love of the community and the team. A key aspect of being allowed to be around the ultras had to do with one of the older members vouching for me, arguing that I had an affinity for the club. Had my interests seemed purely scholarly, I think that they may have asked me to leave.

Stadium Bans

Further contributing to the ultras' feelings of alienation and marginality, punishments issued by the DFB had a radicalizing impact on the hardcore fans at FC Union. At constant risk of receiving long-term stadium bans (*Stadionverbot*), such repressive measures issued had an ironically unifying impact on group solidarity and insularity due to the unreasonably harsh nature of the punishment that felt more than punitive, but vindictive.

“It doesn't interest [the public] that people can wind up in prison, that for sticking a sticker somewhere you can be banned for three years from the stadium,” Matze said with urgency (Personal Interview 2017). “Or when a fan fought with a police officer in a club—he was a fan of Nuremberg—he got a stadium ban because he fought in a club on a Saturday! What does that have to do with football?” Stadium bans expelled individual offenders deemed a threat to public safety from the stadium in order to increase security in the arena and dissuade further illicit conduct. With this goal in mind, a stadium ban could be issued for anything from physical violence, verbal abuse, to graffiti in and around the stadium. The ultras with stadium bans, however, did not stay home after receiving a stadium ban—they still traveled home and away with the fan scene, watching matches in bars close to the stadium. This ironically increased chances of conflict because the banned fans were now in a foreign city, unmonitored—in contrast to a scenario in which they would be contained and

surveilled in the away block. At my first away match, the police in Bochum got wind that Bochum fans were searching for the banned ultras, prompting the officers to allow them into the arena—something that some of the ultras had not experienced for years.

“The ultras want this feeling of being alive, they want to be with each other,” Anna observed as we sat drinking coffee in the Gangway office. “And the DFB wants security—frictionless football without incidents. They want to earn TV broadcasting money, you see?”

“Do you think the stadium bans work?” I asked.

“They work if one’s only goal is to keep people out.” The broader social impact, however, was much more complex, and it reinforced a resentment toward not only the police and the courts, but also the DFB. In confrontations with the police, the ultras already receive a sentence and punishment from the prosecutor, Anna mentioned, meaning that the stadium ban adds insult to injury. “There is nothing worse than receiving a stadium ban,” said Kernchen. “You can’t take away this *Lebensinhalt* from someone. That’s the point of these punishments.” More than just a punitive measure, Kernchen highlighted the cruelty of the punishment when considering it was being issued to the most involved fans—and further, that this was something officials were well aware of when designing the punishment.

On the surface, stadium bans are defended as bureaucratic measures meant to secure the safety of a public from dangerous individuals, but its implementation reveals a drastically different cause and effect—that which is sadistic in the way it takes from the ultras the intimacy of social performance without credibly ensuring public safety. As delinquents processed by the state, the human component of affective governance is strangely absent—or maybe it is, in the way punishment becomes vindictive in its application. As humans become data points in the state’s ongoing struggle to manage affective dispositions of its citizens,

control instead “aims at never ending modulations of moods, capacities, affects, and potentialities, assembled in genetic codes, identification numbers, ratings profiles, and preference listings, that is to say, in bodies of data and information” (Clough and Halley 2007, 19). Ongoing processes of strategic governance and the subjective dispositions of fans toward the state stem from a struggle over public affects and how individuals’ dispositions and subjectivities are to be managed and molded in public space.

But these attempts at managing affective dispositions were largely counterproductive. Despite such intensive measures aimed at managing crowd behavior, Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts were intent on strategically breaking rules and challenging the boundaries in which they could express themselves, seeing the struggle for voice and agency in the stadium as a critical right. After our match against Nuremburg, we walked as a group toward the buses in the rain and as we moved slowly saw the *Stadionverbotler* in the distance. Singing to each other, we sang with arms raised, merging together—

*We're against stadium bans and against repression,
No one makes us small, we only care about our club!
Proud chants full of emotion for a club full of tradition,
And our flags wave, you will never understand!*

Performance constitutes an affective mode of discourse, which not only offers a different narrative and set of ethics than those constructed by the police and the media, but also reorients mood in ways that can flip the impact of repressive measures into moments of triumph. In this way, claims to moral authority were hotly contested. For the ultras in Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts, love and *Lebensinhalt* direct affects toward a performative defiance, that which could not change the parameters of their relationship with authority, but could momentarily transcend those constraints through sheer emotive

perseverance. Perseverance becomes its own form of triumph in ways that reinforce collective solidarity.

“That’s one of the main parts of the *ultra* mentality—that you won’t surrender, even if you know the chances are not high that you can find someone who’s really listening to you,” Vico explained (Personal Interview 2017). In this way, collective action was not just about achieving concrete changes, but instead about honoring their ideological position, up to the last breath and to show an empathy and devotion to those who could not enter. This was shown not only in chants, but also waved on flags and hung on banners. The black cloth that was hung most closely to Wühlesyndikat in the Alte Försterei at every match read—SEKTION STADIONVERBOT—in red block font. On the terrace behind them whirled a huge white flag that depicted an ultra standing outside the gate of the stadium, fingers poking through the fence, watching the match from afar.

“I think it’s important that these people with stadium bans know that we support them,” Kernchen said. “It’s important to always think of them and show them that they’re always with us” (Personal Interview 2016). Even as stadium bans physically separated the ultras from one another during matches, those who were forced to remain outside became something like martyrs in the ways that the ultras devoted performative attention to them in the stadium, solidifying the ultras’ solidarity with one another and their ideological position against the DFB.

Ideologies Toward the Public

Conflicting claims to moral authority—utilized by the state, lawyers, social workers, and the ultras—were the ideological thread that legitimized the effective creation of an urban

war zone. As evident in the judge's handling of Rasty's case and his forced donation to Amnesty International, the legitimacy of governance, and the extent to which it can be utilized, rests upon the moral foundation of action. Security, peace-keeping, and safety are juxtaposed against violence, chaos, and the abstracted culprits—The Deviant. Conflict in this context reflects the shift in warfare in the postmodern era, in which the “enemy” no longer proliferates solely outside the borders of the nation-state, but rather exists within it as well, indeterminate and difficult to identify. Military strategy has correspondingly changed, rendering its boundaries temporally and spatially indeterminate with the express goal of creating and maintaining social order, setting the stage for a constant social war that extends into the matchday environment and its corresponding atmospheres.

As a result, the social and performative dynamic that develops on the terrace is paradoxically one of high publicity and high degrees of social insularity. Aside from trusting individuals with sensitive information, the ultras also had a “no photos” and “no videos” policy on The Forest End, which was strictly enforced not only by the ultras, but also the *ultraorientiert* that rallied around them in the fan block. Newcomers on the terrace were generally given one low-key warning if they were seen taking photos or videos. Many months into my own fieldwork, a fan that I had never even seen on any away trips screamed at me—

“No cell phones!” he shouted.

“I’m not taking photos!” I shouted back, turning around to face him. In fact, I had been typing the words to a chant on my phone. We faced off for several seconds, before I turned away and he dropped the issue. I told Matze later about the confrontation, to which he chided me for being on my phone at all during the match—after all, to stand in The Forest

End is to be involved, not taking field-notes. The photo policy also had to do with protecting the identities of the ultras and controlling the content that went onto social media. The ultras had a photographer—the only person allowed to photograph activity in the block—with which they controlled content and blurred out their own faces before posting anything to the Internet. All in all, confrontations between ultras and fans taking photographs on their phones were relatively commonplace. I saw teenagers scream at middle-aged men on the terrace, which generally was essentially a humiliating performative device that effectively enforced the “no media” rule during games. In this way, there was an attitude of self-purging that disciplined the collective behavior in the block.

This attitude developed out of ideologies pertaining to the ever-present and ever-probing police force. “Germany has the best police in Europe,” Ali argued. “You see what they have—cameras, lots of gear. They’re like soldiers. It’s like war sometimes. And they are scared of us. The politicians are scared of what will happen, you know?” This scenario begins to reveal the depth of awareness that the ultras at FC Union have toward the relationship between themselves and the state, and their own processes of reflection in which they postulate the ‘why’ of their circumstances. Such questions stem from experience with authorities, initiating a critical awareness based on the ways in which the state manifests in the context of the sporting event. “The mentality in America—all the people are at home, lots of people are fat, lots of people watch TV; they drink alcohol or take drugs; they hang out at home; they chill instead of having political interests—instead of looking to see what is going on in the world.”

“—Why is the world the way it is?” Ali posed. “Why are some people so rich? Why are some people so poor? Naturally the ultras are a problem because they’re able to mobilize

people. We go to the streets.” Ali’s observations seem almost disjointed. Yet, the injustice of the scenarios implied in his questions are meant to be juxtaposed against the hypocrisy of the *ultra* as culture bearer being branded as deviant. In contrast to his conception of Americans as lazy and unaware, he sees himself and the ultras with their eyes open to the world around them.

At its broadest scale of impact, the circulation of information about ultras and the framing of events in which they are implicated are at stake. If the government treated the ultras as deviants, then the most common news reports about ultras were not far from this classification either. Ali pointed out the peculiar public fascination with football and crowd violence—that something sets it apart from discourse about other forms of violence that enter the public sphere. “In Germany there is always violence,” Ali said. He noted all the acts of domestic abuse that occurred without intensive media interest or state surveillance. “A man hits a woman, someone hits someone—but only at football is violence bad.” Ali also highlighted the lack of scandal or attention paid to violence at other public events. “[Violence] happens at every club and every festival, but nonetheless the newspapers are always showing something bad [about us] instead.” Like most *ultra* groups in Germany, *Wühlesyndikat* and *Hammer Hearts* would not speak to the media because of the ways that they were subsequently represented. “There will never be a relationship at all because the media have too often let down the fan culture and the *ultra* culture,” said Kernchen. “They have badly represented them. The trust isn’t there. The media write what the readers want to hear and dictate what is brought into circulation.”

Over beers in our regular bar, Matze becomes serious. East Germany was famous for its surveillance of its citizens, but he tells me that “regular people” just don’t get it—things

nowadays aren't all that different. State and media action, then, shifted perspective and radicalized subjectivity, alienating ultras—who as a result—saw themselves pushed further toward the margins of public opinion and their classification as “bad fans.” Much like Ali, the issue at stake for Matze extended past the context of sport—it was a rift in perception of the role of the state and the functionality of democracy in Germany.

“The unorganized fans located in the Sitzplatz won't have much problems with the police,” he said dismissively. “They won't care if there's a police database or not.” Experience, then, is key to shifts in ontology and epistemology of the fans. Direct contact with the state changed fan perspectives in regards to the ways that the state functioned and classified its citizens. The result was often a larger critical awakening.

“Germany has a problem that many people living here [won't] experience,” he said. “I'm not saying this as someone from the Left, but as a fan—as an ultra. Most people will never scrutinize the fact that Germany isn't the best country in the world...” (Personal Interview 2017)

Atmosphere into Collective Protest

I have thus far outlined the ways in which multiple and contradictory apparatuses of governance manage the affective dispositions of subjects toward a liberal democratic model of public citizenship, often in counterproductive ways that elevate tension and radicalize ultras' subjectivities through visceral encounter in the stadium space. As I have shown in Chapters 1 and 2, the sporting event has been increasingly modified to better streamline consumption, altering behavioral and social possibilities in and around the game. However, ultras are the antithesis to these changes, harnessing the affective potential of the crowd. In

this way, crowds are a double-edged sword that powers the affective dynamic within the stadium, enhancing the value of the professional event. But managing affect and cultural production within the stadium without eliminating it altogether has, based upon my ethnographic fieldwork, proven counterproductive to the goals of the state, further radicalizing its subjects.

If the state's attempts at managing crowd affects in the context of football were to *prevent* illicit activity, then the impact of their efforts could be seen as quite ironic, often creating the scenarios they wished to prevent. But I have also suggested that perhaps in managing affects, the logics of governance were in fact geared toward preemption—as Massumi (2015b) has argued—meant to *produce* scenarios that the state could handle with the resources at their disposal. The ongoing tension spurred in many of my interlocutors a lucid awareness of the ways that the state manages threat. But the spectral nature of governance instigates a radical turn in how ultras view their relationship to the state and their perceived image in the public sphere.

Wühlesyndikat's collective action in public, as I saw it, was dialed in response to the particularly repressive state strategies that threatened not only the group's existence, but more broadly, the fan culture at FC Union. In this sense, protest was of essential utility to the ultras in order to selectively comment on relevant issues, but also to toggle atmosphere through collective action in ways that reoriented perception around the event. The meaning and interpretation of protest fray in moments of encounter. In this way, ultras reorient outcomes through affective responses in the face of constraints that are out of their control.

Protest does not always look like protest. Its elements can be perceived on multiple layers within *ultra* performativity. I have pointed out that the ultra style challenges the

commercial and ideological tenants of modern football through the concerted decision to break league rules and state laws. Through the use of illegal mediums like pyrotechnics, stickers, and graffiti, protest is implicit to the ultra style of performance and at other times overt in its attempts to grab attention to particular issues. Conflict manifested in the form of collective action, rubbing against and at times breaking league rules that were designed to streamline security, customer compliance, and the influx of capital as a part of the stadium experience. Decisions that garnered commentary and critique from fans centered around a number of issues, such as inconvenient kickoff times for fans motivated by TV scheduling, attempts at reducing space for standing terraces, the increasing influx of advertisements in the arena, and the rapid ascent of the virtually brand new football club (and overt promotional tool) called Red Bull Leipzig. As such, a core question at stake being raised by the two *ultra* groups, Wühlesyndikat and Hammer Hearts, was—*who is football for?*

As football has been increasingly restructured by the DFB in order to accommodate its television audience, the ultras at FC Union were fighting against the grain for a style of football fandom that retained at its core the socializing element of the standing terrace. Support was defined by a consistent physical presence and collective participation. Seen as a misdirected fetishization of real support, the enraptured fan shouting at the TV garnered disgust from many ultras—

“If I’m sitting here and I’m shouting for Wayne Rooney to score against Liverpool or whoever it is,” said Eoghan to me years earlier, “I’m in a very passive way supporting Wayne Rooney and Manchester United and I’m hoping that those eleven players beat those other eleven players because I’ve somehow convinced myself that that has an impact on my life even though it obviously doesn’t. But when you’re actually going to games, obviously you’re supporting the eleven players, but it’s a club thing” (Personal Interview 2012).

This rift in styles of fandom has created a massive gap between the subjectivities (and standards of dedication) of those engaging with “cooler mediums” of support (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, 277) such as watching on TV in comparison to those who religiously attend matches at the stadium. With television rights to Bundesliga matches in 2016 amounting to 4.6 billion euros and millions of fans limiting their participation to TV viewership, it is unsurprising that the ultras faced an uphill battle to be considered relevant in the eyes of league officials.

* * *

On a cold January afternoon soon after the 50th Anniversary match against Borussia Dortmund, the ultras gather in the center of the Altstadt Köpenick to lead a march to the Alte Försterei before a benefit match against Austria Salzburg—a new team that was formed by the fans when their previous club was bought by Red Bull and renamed Red Bull Salzburg. The new management subsequently changed the club colors from purple to the colors of the brand—red, white, and yellow. In the last decade, Red Bull had been buying football clubs in a number of countries as a promotional strategy. The clubs were subsequently renamed after the brand—such as the New York Red Bulls, Red Bull Brazil, and Red Bull Ghana.

Closest to home for the fans at FC Union, “RB Leipzig” was the latest installment of clubs under the ownership of Red Bull. But the tactics utilized by the company to create the club were especially vile to the hardcore support of clubs across Germany because of the ways that RB Leipzig worked around league rules to create a dynamic marketing gimmick. On the bus, as the sun crested the horizon, I learned on my first away trip with *Szene Köpenick* not to bring a knockoff version of Red Bull on the bus. Having been given a beer, I

offered around my Booster—resulting in physical repulsion from those around me. It didn't matter that it wasn't Red Bull, because it was still *like* Red Bull.

Learning specifically from the pushback from the fans in Austria, Red Bull GmbH purchased a fifth division German club with no fans called SSV Markranstädt, with the goal of bringing the team to the German Bundesliga. Due to league rules, Red Bull could not call the club “Red Bull Leipzig,” instead using the team name RasenBallSport (RB) Leipzig as a legal alternative, and minutely changing the club's logo so as not to be visually identical to that of the brand's. The genius of the maneuver hinged on the ways in which the football club's acronyms and symbols nonetheless referenced the Red Bull brand without any use of the corporate logos. Red Bull also organized the club in a way to deny accessible and democratic decision-making. Of special value to the German football *Verein* is the 50+1 rule, which states that no individual can own a majority stake in a football club, thus taking complete control over its decision-making capacities. But RB Leipzig made voting membership surprisingly expensive, and reserved the right to deny membership to applicants without reason. As a result, the board of members is dramatically small, consisting of an oligarchy of Red Bull GmbH employees. The *ultra* response in Germany to RB Leipzig as the team rose from the fourth, to the third, and then the second division, was unanimously vitriolic. RB Leipzig, in effect, became a capitalist anti-Christ, the symbolic culmination of commercialism in German professional football. Kernchen summed up the rift in supporting ideology between himself and the fans of newly formed teams such as RB Leipzig (Red Bull)—

“These flags [that the RB supporters wave] that say ‘football-culture since 2 years’—I find the ‘passion’ from those fans laughable” (Personal Interview 2016). For Kernchen, cultivation of atmosphere was contingent upon the historical depth of the club.

Ultras across Germany began debating the best ways in which to protest RB Leipzig’s presence as the club rose through the divisions. Some groups boycotted matches, while others found various performative routes in which to comment upon the RB Leipzig’s threat to “real” fan culture. For Union’s match against RB in Leipzig in 2016, the ultras abstained from the first few minutes of the match, remaining in the gangway under the stands, in effect underscoring the relatively placid and low-key atmosphere in the stadium from the RB fans without the raucous atmosphere generated by the away support. The ultras convinced the entire FC Union support to stand with them. Entering to the crack of firecrackers thrown into the block, FC Union rushed the block, giving extra energy to the performance due to the significance of the opponent. Chants broke out to the tune of the White Stripes *Seven Nation Army*:

All bulls are pigs! [Alle Bülle sind Schweine!]

But the police weren’t happy either, Kernchen told me, because they interpreted the chant as a shot at them instead of Red Bull. Colloquially called *Bülle* (roughly translated to ‘cops’), “All Bulls are Pigs” was also a commonly used chant against the police. Though Kernchen asserted that the chant was directed at RB, a double meaning was overlaid in ways that could potentially mean either, or both.

As we stand around at the meeting point in Altstadt Köpenick, the square begins to fill with people. Wühlesyndikat didn’t often coordinate large-scale marches to the stadiums

like some other groups, but the symbolic importance of the game was enough to warrant a demonstration. Seeing the commercialization of football as a primary threat to their existence, the ultras at FC Union wanted to emphasize the importance of “fan culture,” which they saw as the life-blood of any football club. A thousand people strong, we walk through the streets chanting and clapping in unison, stopping at the narrowest point where our chants are amplified loudest. Flares are dropped and red smoke rises from the ground as we sing. Working “like a drug that pumps through your veins” (The General 2017), adrenaline spikes as the smoke hits your nostrils and stings your throat.

*We are Unioners,
We're the crazy ones!
We break through all barriers
Our colors are white and red,
And we'll stay loyal until we're dead!*

The police have gotten wind of the march, and the scene begins to change dramatically. What began as several officers standing on the margins has accumulated into a crew of vans with flashing lights full of riot police. Offering unsolicited accompaniment on the way to the stadium, the vans await the crowd as they emerge from the narrow streets of the Altstadt, encircling us, transforming an emotional but peaceful scene into a tense affair. A standard maneuver, the police segregate and contain the crowd, using officers' bodies and vehicles to create a barrier between us and the surrounding public. It is the job of the riot police to keep us within this boundary, making it very difficult to leave the confines that they have constructed. Nearing the stadium, the crowd of around one thousand Unioners makes its way down one of the main streets, Lindenstraße, as the bus with the players makes its way,

the crowd parting to let it through. People clap and others pat the side of the bus. Fists are raised in the air.

And never forget—EISERN UNION! EISERN UNION! EISERN UNION!

Though the police attempt to separate the Unioners, crowd action disrupts ordinary affects by disrupting the sleepy atmospheres of urban Köpenick, claiming territory, and blurring the public and the private as sound invades homes and businesses. Crowd performance in the street thus runs on adrenaline, leaving the onlooker to discern between festivity and danger. People are opening their windows to see what is going on—a boy lights a sparkler from a third-floor balcony and the crowd roars. Meant to be seen and heard, chants sonically alter the normal sights and sounds of daily life, constructing an audience of outsiders who are to experience the spectacle of the crowd. The heightened ambience on the streets becomes increasingly combustible as the sonic vibrations move through us, creating the intimate and anonymous experience of “being touched-without-being-touched” (Cusick 2006, 9). Along the way to the stadium, song choice modulates mood, which is stoked and modified over time by the capos who lead the chants.

Suddenly, there is a commotion ahead of me. At the edge of the stadium parking lot, something has happened—people are running away with pepperspray in their eyes and the paved expanse in front of the stadium transforms into a battleground. The riot police have their batons out. Bottles become weapons. Many people force themselves through the turnstiles past the stewards to avoid the chaos, while an older group of fans charge the police. Many run, but the ultras hold their ground, instead covering their faces with their scarves to avoid identification. Dressed in armor, the riot police have a physical advantage, but they are

outnumbered and they are eventually surrounded by the ultras. I feel a brief pause, in which the police are crouched together in anticipation with their batons and shields out. They are huddled into a tight circle as the crowd forms around them, and it's in this moment that the police are at their mercy. Fists are raised and many begin shouting in English—

“All Cops are Bastards! ACAB!”

Environment ruptures routine and opens up public space for collective improvisation. Atmosphere is fluid, never static—contingent on the physical space and the actors within it, wed to the politics of the particular moment. Changing with constant shifts in place, time, and context, the meaning and purpose of chants morph. The ultras act as a group, collectively adapting to situations in real time, strategically modulating mood as the situation changes. If affect propels action, then ideology is underscored and viscerally experienced through the sonic and visual spectacle of bodies moving in tandem, fists pumping in unison to the rhythm of, *“All Cops are Bastards!”*

While the socially and subjectively transformative effects of physical violence can be conceived as a performative strategy in which to inscribe and reinforce discrepant power dynamics, Neil Whitehead (2004) and David McDonald (2009) also point out the violent dimensions of cultural performance itself. If violence can be seen as a type of cultural performance, then performance can also be operationalized as a form of violent practice (McDonald 2009). As the ultras weaponize atmosphere against the police on the streets in Köpenick, the boundaries between performance and violence inhabit a “seamless aesthetic loop” (McDonald 2009, 62)—they feed back into one another as mutual strategies of applied force.

If publicly violent acts serve to stage power and legitimacy (Schmidt and Schröder 2001, 6), the ultras' chants against the police assert an emotive counterpoint. "You see this is what they want," said Ali later. "They wear their body armor, they wear their masks—they look forward to football games. They want to beat us. They want to break us—so we resist. Resistance, however, did not entail physical force, but instead restraint. "They beat a bunch of our people and that didn't need to happen," Ali said. "It's hard when you see a friend being attacked and you can't do anything." The ultras' use of atmosphere has a communicative and ideological directive. It is at this moment of "affective attunement" (Massumi 2015a) where feeling and knowing come together among participants. To operationalize mood—to chant forcefully that All Cops Are Bastards—is to apply emotive force upon another and *it is to know through feeling* (Trezise and Wake 2013, 21), that, as Vico put it, "we are powerful and you can't break us."

Even though it was a benefit match, the atmosphere was electric—I felt a mixture of boisterousness and defiance around me after the melee in the stadium parking lot. Yet the stadium was half empty, containing only 9,000 supporters. "I thought that the atmosphere at that game was the best I've seen in years," Ali said adamantly. "I looked at people, and everyone knew what to do, but without any compulsion. And at this game it was all about Union." In this way, the quality and attitude of the supporters who had showed up was dramatically distilled, creating a better atmosphere than a normal league match. The game ultimately came to symbolize issues that were more relevant to the active fan scene than the competitive success of the club, and further, that "fan culture" existed in a precarious position—one that could be extinguished without exerting presence and their value to professional football. RB Leipzig was the embodiment of these changes to professional

football—that which lacked tradition, passion, and culture--replaced instead with “plastic fans.”

Even further than resilience, I argue that *operationalizing mood alters outcomes*. After entering the Alte Försterei, spirits had reached a low. “We thought about things, and some people didn’t want to sing, but I said we need to sing,” Ali said. “We need to be the winners of the situation.” The parameters of action and power did not change through the course of the march or the game, but rather atmosphere was altered in a way that allowed the ultras to regain emotive leverage. The feeling surrounding the outcome with the police had changed.

“*If we remain quiet then they’ve won,*” Ali continued.

Intermittently throughout the match, the stadium rang out with chants against the police—*All Cops are Pigs!* The police watched from the margins and this time everyone knew who the chant was for.

Performative critiques such as the fan march were not unique to FC Union. During the second year of my fieldwork, Ultras Dynamo Dresden dressed in full camouflage marching the streets of Karlsruhe lighting flares and throwing smoke canisters. Once inside the stadium, the group unfurled a banner in the stadium that read—*War Against the DFB [Krieg dem DFB]*—highlighting the animosity and style of rebellion with which groups approached football’s governing body. After comments circulated by DFB officials that such protests were devoid of productive critique, ultra groups across Germany, including FC Union, presented their own response in the following weeks with Spruchbänder. Wühlesyndikat’s read—*Our Problem with You? Your Lack of Understanding for our Standing Terrace Culture*.

Across the city in the west, Hertha Berlin's ultras presented their own choreography—*The Real Gravediggers of Football*—with large illustrations of high-ranking DFB and FIFA officials, which enveloped a quarter of Berlin's Olympic Stadium. Affective and emotional, protest cultivates atmosphere in order to jumpstart action and reaction.

The Deviant

But atmosphere does not imply an all-encompassing attunement of minds and bodies working flawlessly in tandem. Rather, performance in public space forces together deviating perspectives, interpretations, and reactions amongst participants and onlookers. In fact, newspapers presented radically oppositional interpretations of the event, which predictably invoked associations of hardcore football fans with deviant behaviors. Todd Gitlin has argued that the reach and accessibility of the mass media enables it to select and frame stories that the public is reliant on as a means of constructing a reality of the world around them, making the mass media a significant social force in “the forming and delimiting of public assumptions, attitudes, and moods—of ideology, in short” (2003, 9). The result is that radical (and at times nuanced) political positionalities are denatured by journalistic frames that seek to report on “significant events” by covering singular themes such as crime or violence in culturally accessible ways (ibid, 35). The *Kurier.at*, like many other newspapers, published a drastically different narrative than my ethnographic vignette:

“Berlin Hooligans Clash with Police. 21 Officers Injured.”

In this headline the Deviant is constructed and simultaneously delegitimized. Generally, the media doesn't interview ultras because they don't have the social capital to provide credible

information, while government sources on the other hand are largely afforded a much higher degree of respectability and trust (Chomsky and Herman 1988). But journalists do occasionally reach out to ultras for interviews, and unsurprisingly, most groups refuse to talk based on learning from past experiences in which the meaning of their words and perspectives were distorted. “Most of the time when a journalist will ask ultras for a quote, you can’t be sure that really it’s exactly what you said,” Vico said.

“Sometimes they will just take part of the quote and put a sentence before it or take a part of the quote and relate it to another topic. So you can’t be sure that the information you would like to give will be used in context.” Vico understood the paradoxical position Wühlesyndikat found themselves in—the group refused a voice in the media at the expense of being heard—a self-aware policy that most ultras chose based on the predictability of the outcome in the papers.

Despite many journalistic sources portraying cartoonish images of ultras as hooligans, the problem more broadly with tabloids in addition to the comparatively nuanced content was an underlying impetus toward garnering an affective response from by framing the subject (the ultra) and the event (violence) with headlines and photographs that conveyed scenes of chaos. FC Union’s corporate sponsor, BZ, published a story on the violence at the benefit match with a police version of events and a rebuttal from FC Union’s representatives, which claimed police aggression to be the primary cause of the fighting. Nonetheless, the title underscored a dominant narrative despite a marginally greater degree of nuance in the fine print.

“Fan Riots Before Union’s Match Against Salzburg: 80 Injured.”

The title sat next to a photograph of the march and the ultras lighting red smoke canisters—for the newspaper, an adequate representation of fan aggression at the march. Pyrotechnics, then, are used in the media as an affective device, which creates impressions around the identities (or lack thereof) and fearsome enactment of covert presence.

“You have this fire—it’s a really good visual metaphor for the whole atmosphere in the stadium and how you should feel in the block,” said Sal. “Maybe normal fans see it as a really aggressive thing, which I guess it is in a way.” Sal highlights the perceptive disjuncture between ultras and outsiders—the aggression of performance required to cultivate an experiential realm in which atmosphere is felt as a spatial, physical, and relational ecology that at its culmination is meant to externalize passion, and in the process completely transform public space. As I sat reading *Der Spiegel*, a highly regarded journalistic magazine, in a café near my house, I flipped to an article on the ways in which the state governs football fan scenes across Germany. It was a sobering article on the many tactics that the police can use on football fans in order to catch criminal offenders and prevent illicit activity, entitled “Covert Military Buildup” (2016, 108-10). Next to the headline, an ultra sits atop a stadium barrier, shrouded in smoke, shirtless, wearing a balaclava, and holding out a lit marine flare. Unsurprisingly, interviews with individuals who claimed status as ultras were absent, but the processes in which individuals were branded by the state were laid out clearly. I ripped the pages out of the magazine. The headline and photo depicted warfare between two sides—the state on one end and The Deviant on the other.

In the German context, the identity politics of the masked Deviant provoke anxiety because he *isn't* ethnically Other, making him truly invisible and formless in the public sphere (Warner 2002). The Deviant is the ultimate specter—a ghost met with fascination and

fear. Rational-critical commentary on the relationship between ultras and violence largely obfuscates the particularly establishment-centric perspective and positionality of the journalist in a way that underscores the ideals of normative public behavior—that which can be characterized by the tempered, balanced, and predictable behavior of the citizen in public space. The implicit performativity of *ultra* acts as a foil to this ideal, referencing this very standard in its enactment as *something else* that publicly rejects, and threatens the ordinary affects of public space.

Generally, the journalistic standard of reporting adopts a standardized Western rhetoric surrounding “antiviolence”—that which is intractably linked to the need to “disarm and disable the militancy and intractability of others by reference to the overwhelming and ‘protective’ violence of ‘law’, ‘civilization’, and ‘Western democracy’” (Whitehead 2004, 61). It is through this cultural dynamic that the media both construct and capitalize upon the spectacle of violence between ultras and the state (Larkins 2015). The affective component of journalism constructs a narrative of conflict that produces financial value and commodifies conflict, thus adding momentum to the cycle of violence in the state’s desire to show that they are doing something.

“Nobody reports that tonight Munchengladbach ultras sung for ninety minutes, didn’t light any pyro, didn’t present any stolen banners, and the atmosphere was great,” said Sal. “That’s not a news story. A news story is—ultras attacked Preußen Münster at a service station. A news story is—Frankfurt invades Berlin and runs riot for an hour. Or even pyrotechnics—apparently that’s enough to get in the news. It comes with a picture and it looks like violence, apparently. It’s an event, so those things get in the news” (Personal Interview 2017).

Reframed in the media, The Deviant becomes the photo negative of the liberal democratic subject—anonymous, devoid of human characteristics, out of order, made

sentient only through its deviant behaviors. What is perhaps even scarier, is that they are very much *in control* through their mastery of their environment. The crowd's synchronous displays of aggression and festivity threaten because they enact an alternative order—not chaos. Coordinated bodies and pyrotechnics rupture the spatialization of the state. Crowd performance thus exhibits the group's insistence upon “living differently” in overt ways that underline the risk they will take to publicly undermine the authorities. Far from the sublime moment of affective attunement within the experiential realm of the crowd, however, The Deviant is conjured by the media and subsequently produced in the public imaginary as a powerful construct that dissolves when one looks for it, to be reformed again and again through media circulation and calls for stricter forms of governance by the police and the DFB. You do not *find* The Deviant—you make it.

Conclusions

The perceived delinquent behavior at football constructs The Deviant through the attempted management of affect, which takes on a number of collaborative and conflicting sets of action and strategy from various apparatuses of governance. But journalistic reporting and its circulatory power are also a key element of the processes of governance, in which violence is spectacularized through reports that depict drawn out warfare between ultras and police. And while the media in more rigorous articles will present a more nuanced version of reality, journalism is nonetheless an affective medium of performance. Intentionally or not, reporting makes a point *to induce fear by constructing threat* in utilizing provocative headlines and photographs that are juxtaposed in ways to imply a connection between ultras and violence even when there is no direct relationship between the two. In this way,

journalism frames stories that are affective and emotive, shaping readers' impressions of ultras, irrespective of facts. Through a focus on conflict and chaos, media works within a foundational ideology that references a preconceived moral order and ordinary affects in public space, using photographs and narrative to portray sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit threat posed by The Deviant to this ideal. This journalistic frame is motivated in part by its profitability (Herman and Chomsky 1988, McChesney 2000). The media commoditize violence in a way that legitimizes government action to address the "problem" with more money and greater force.

I have argued that myriad apparatuses of governance intervene in the stadium in an attempt to manage public performance and expression, challenging and reinforcing the ideological resolve of the ultras at FC Union. More specifically, governance in the context of the professional sporting event aims to address future outcomes by managing public affect. Flares in particular disrupt the illusion of the "spatialized state" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). As a result, moral authority is an essential component in which to justify invasive action that subsumes life and alters subjectivities and socialization in the fan block. Constructing The Deviant, however, is a risky gamble at reestablishing authority and consolidating power in the public sphere. Moral authority justifies increasingly radical and invasive measures to exorcise The Deviant, while inherently betraying the state's attempts to remove it from the public sphere. As such, the Deviant both demonstrates the utility of the government to provide "security," only to reveal its inability to do so (Hardt and Negri 2004, 30).

In contrast to journalistic and state conceptions to violence, I have depicted an ethnographic scenario at FC Union Berlin in which varied forms of structural violence are in fact engrained in the social fabric, which threatens the socializing potential and

organizational capacity of football fans in public space. From this point of view, physical violence cannot be conceived as a momentary break in the social order at the Alte Försterei, but rather a perpetual aspect of fandom that has been woven into subjectivity of the ultras and contributed to the insulation of *ultra* groups within the fan scene. As such, I have found that the harsh climate in which the ultras operate produces a radically invested subject that challenges professional sport's ideal of the compliant consumer-citizen.

The result is that organized and insurrectionary affects compel multiple and often conflicting strategies of governance, which are geared toward prevention and preemption of deviant behavior. This infinitive logic geared toward future events is meant to perpetuate power in its current form. The ironic result of such intensive measures of governance, however, is an awakening of critical thought in regards to the state and the socially repressive logics of capital in the sporting context. This awareness in part motivates ongoing collective solidarity, at which point resistance fuses with routine. Collective action no longer seems radical, but normal—common sense. The ultras occupy a paradoxical position in which the freedom they exert is created out of the constraints placed upon them. The exhilaration of freedom is conditional upon oppression. Atmosphere at its peak, then, acts as a transcendent apparatus. “When I’m at Union, I forget everything else,” said Ali. “I forget everything that’s hard, and that makes you free.”

As the ultras are confronted with the violent and pervasive moral authority of the state, I show that through modulating atmosphere, collective action can render outcomes and repressive constraints perceptively malleable. While atmosphere can momentarily transcend its constraints, it *does* alter outcomes as well [*If we do not sing, then they’ve won!*]. To operationalize mood in this context, is to change the affective range of participants and their

emotive perceptions around the government's ability to manage the affective disposition of the fan scene at large.

Until the Last Breath

One of the points of this dissertation—that the conflicting strategies of governance have served to further radicalize ultras in relation to the state and the discourse of the public sphere—cannot be stated without asserting my own changing subject position throughout the span of my field research. My own salient contact with ultras and with authority undoubtedly informed the ways that I disciplined my analyses to fit within the parameters of academic logic and discourse. Involved with each group to varying degrees of intimacy and trust, I too got a taste for the sacrifice required to live a life as an *ultra*. Away trips were a legitimate stress on the body. We often woke up at 3 AM to meet before dawn, only to arrive back home around the same time 24 hours later, off-kilter from sleep deprivation. I felt pleasure and pride in the physical exhaustion that was a part of this experience. The sacrifice offered to fandom had physical attributes—it could be felt—creating pathways for understanding the salience of the *ultra* lifestyle. The dedication to crowd support flirted with suffering. But we also had the charismatic magnetism of the crowd to boost us, creating within the *ultra* lifestyle a dynamic tension between pleasure and pain.

The exhilaration of the atmosphere was also a personal necessity. Having ended a 7-year relationship during the first year of my fieldwork, this collective intimacy had particular salience as I latched onto anything that mitigated my own feelings of loneliness and isolation in a strange new place. A lyric from the chant that Ali had introduced in the stadium found its way onto my body in the form of a tattoo months later—*We stand by you in the darkest hour*. On the away terrace at Paderborn, we sang the song over and over until the management turned off the floodlights. I could connect with Ali and his love of FC Union because, like him, I forgot everything else when I was there. My interest in affect and atmosphere stems in

part from the meanings I constructed out of my own participatory performance and the ways I navigated my feelings when occupying the anonymous intimacy of the crowd.

Equally formative, my arguments have been impacted by my own negative experiences with the police, which often lined up with the narratives that ultras told about their conflict-laden interactions. Why would the police in Düsseldorf force us onto a shuttle bus and *lie* about its destination? The entire FC Union fan scene missed the scheduled train back to Berlin that day and got removed from the train yet again by police on the way home. At matches and protests, I occasionally felt the disciplinary hand of the police wielded in my direction. It was hard to forget the way that certain police looked at me. Hatred between ultras and police felt mutual—as did the violence that erupted between them. Reinserting a human dimension to the state’s disciplinary measures, Sal noted the mutual and ongoing animosity between ultras and the state.

“I’ve been injured by police before, but that was after we kicked the shit out of a football stadium—we threw seats on the pitch,” he said. “Did they act like animals? Yeah. But so did we” (Personal Interview 2017). These ruptures were the ammunition that justified a buildup of governing apparatuses aimed at managing affect and deviancy at sporting events and public space at large. I marveled at the spectrality of the state in Germany—the undercover police, the potential informants, and the many databases, all of which prompted me to wonder about my position in relation to the state. After all, I was someone on a grant funded in part by the German state, yet it was feasible that I was also being monitored—but maybe not. To my eyes, governance often appeared as a performative spectacle in public space in its diverse forms.

Part of my argument has been that ultras and fans involved in their various fan scenes are branded as deviant before crime has been committed, feeding back into the ways that ultras see themselves in the broader public sphere. The classification works to fulfill its own prophecy. In this way, hostile encounters prove to be formative in ultras' perceptions about the role of the state, the public sphere, and their relation to it as deviant subjects. Most ultras I spoke with thought the police liked the conflict just as much as the ultras. While I have attempted to portray the diverse and contradictory ways in which governance impacted the social lives of the fan scenes, the blunt interactions with police were often foregrounded by my interlocutors because they were the most evocative, memorable, and formative to their experiences. I struggled with this as well through my own encounters with police brutality.

Not only limited to surveillance and ongoing tensions with the police, I constantly encountered news-media and fictional drama, which distorted and fetishized hardcore football fandom, permeating popular culture.

I flip on the TV. A detective show depicts a crazed Hansa Rostock fan. He has wild eyes and beats his fists on the table in the interrogation room at the police station. He is volatile and erratic—unpredictable. This is the teaser for the full episode airing later tonight.

The circulatory power and affective resonance of such mischaracterizations are key to ultras' perceptions of their place in the broader public sphere as deviants. Several of my interlocutors and I sent online articles back and forth with each other. Sometimes we laughed together about the most inflammatory journalistic pieces that spectacularized ultras and made them into violent caricatures. Other times we commiserated about the imbalance of perspectives that were projected on powerful media platforms, which influenced public perception around hardcore football fandom as a sort of deviancy. Acquaintances had a hard

time understanding who my research was about. Hooligans were the closest cultural referent that people could latch onto in order to grasp the subject of my research, even after my attempts to explain who and what ultras were.

In this way, *ultra* is also defined by its participants perceived marginalization in the public sphere—a subject position reinforced by journalism and media that fixate on violence and fetishize illiberal character traits that portray football fans as irrational and unpredictable. The media, then, plays a critical role in constructing the deviant because it articulates and infers the idealized principles of citizenship through the mediation of information in the public sphere (Asad 2003). In the public sphere, anxieties persist around the ways in which the crowd lacks a reliance on rational-critical discourse, deconstructs individualism as the bedrock of subjectivity, and sparks a historical fear around mass affects (fascism) and deviant potentiality. The ways in which crowd action is interpreted, remediated, and circulated through more powerful platforms alienates and radicalizes ultras. With few exceptions, journalists were disregarded by ultras because they couldn't be trusted to accurately convey their perspectives. Eruptions of physical violence are essentialized as attributes of the crowd. Too many groups had bad experiences, which taught them that trusting mediators to effectively voice their positions generally delivered more fallout than anything else. Amongst ultras in Dublin and Berlin, public misperception was perceived as a part of the *ultra* life—a societal position that the ultras both resented and embraced.

Upon touching the ground in Ireland, the border patrol after hearing my interest in Shamrock Rovers told me to “stay away from the ultras.” In Germany, Vico marveled at the power of the DFB's platform to project their perspectives and ideologies around fandom. The amount of journalistic and fictional media attention granted to hardcore football fans and

hooligans exemplified this fascination and fear around the character traits of football fans as brutish, unpredictable, and violent. From this position, violence emerges as senseless and random. The degree to which I was involved in these three *ultra* fan scenes over 2+ years of field research made it increasingly difficult not to feel increasingly alienated by the majority of media reports. In terms of achieving a better standing in the public sphere, the *ultra* style of crowd action is a bit like screaming into the wind. Even when you express yourself at every game, almost no one will understand you. What I learned from Ultra Saint Pauli, Wühlesyndikat, and Black Corner was that explaining to a broader public their subject position was not a priority. Yet paradoxically, public address is at the heart of *ultra*. The distinction between fascination and fear in the perception of crowd action is the key to belonging or exclusion from ultra.

If you get it you get it, and if you don't, you don't.

* * *

Ultra aims to subvert and protest the commercializing logics that structure professional sport with the full-awareness that there is no possibility of a return to any kind of “traditional” spectating experience without television or sponsors. It is a symbolic resistance right to the very end. This radicalism is constituted by *ultra*'s critique of global capital and the ways in which governance often works to repress crowd action—it is an ethos of crowd support that contests the commercial strategies, which serve to streamline the revenue of the professional sporting event. Alienated from these prerogatives, ultras position themselves Against Modern Football, which can be broadly conceived as a finance driven logic that structures professional football as an industry from which value is expropriated by investors. These developments are accompanied by a shift in fan subjectivity geared toward

consumption of fandom and identity as a commodity. Trending toward softer fandoms that favor consumption as a means of fan praxis and subjectivity building (Giulianotti 2002), ultras see the majority of fans as customers that have traded out the sociality and intimacy of in-person support. In Dublin, these fans were called barstoolers—in Berlin, it was eventies that comprised the majority of sports fans. At the stadium, ultras saw this treatment of sport as a leisure event and its new clientele as contributors to the waning of affect in the stadium. Ultras, in contrast, are both valued and feared as culture bearers and problem fans because their performative practice often brings them in direct conflict with the state and competing apparatuses of governance with interests in alleviating risk and inflammatory fan dispositions.

More than a means of supporting one's team, *ultra* is also a performative device for fans to protest the perceived atrophy of local community as a result of the logics that drive the contemporary flow of media (television broadcasting), labor (player migration), and capital (athletic/competitive success and player sales) in professional sport. Through cheap travel, discourse on online forums and fanzines, and the appropriation of stadium chants and performative aesthetics on media platforms like YouTube and Facebook, *ultra* is a transnational fandom which publicly opposes the financially incentivized strategies that characterize professional sport. Through my case studies, insurgent fandom exists in tandem with varying degrees of precarity. The parameters of action of each group are impacted by their club administrations' determination of the groups' cultural capital and their affective value. Rising ticket prices in globally competitive leagues have contributed to this precarity in which the cost of attendance coupled with state surveillance and censorship threaten the existence of organized and coordinated spectator-based fan communities. Of particular

salience, persisting up *until the last breath* was the articulated mentality of support at FC Union. *Ultra* is a transnational imaginary that defines itself through this struggle. Through the appropriation and remediation of *ultra* as a performative aesthetic and ideology of support across three different field sites, I have examined the agentive potentialities and limitations of crowd action as an avenue toward living differently in plain sight.

Ultras are the influential minority on the terrace that take on the role of culture bearers in the stadium. At all three of my field sites, fandom was made salient by its connection to the past—it was representative of tightly knit communities which once were but may never have been. Ultras' critique of professional sport is contingent upon an assumption around sport as a social site whose emotive valence is tied to the club's integration into the fabric of the neighborhood. As such, *ultra*, identity, and urban space are intimately connected. The social marginalization that motivates *ultra* spurs action aimed at preserving public culture amidst the ongoing privatization and commoditization of public space. As I write this conclusion, Anschutz Entertainment Group plans to tear down the Fanbogen at EHC Dynamo Berlin in order to develop the sliver of property that it occupies near the arena. As the single site designed for the active fan scene, there is now a scramble against the odds to find a new location for the Fanbogen in the increasingly valuable and gentrified neighborhood of Friedrichshain. Such bureaucratic and finance driven decisions by the owners are a direct threat to the collective organization of the fans—a trend that has increasingly alienated and radicalized the hardcore fans with deep ties to traditional notions of what fandom is supposed to be. *Ultra* is the cultural response and the pushback to this trend—it demands to be seen, heard, and felt through its claims to public space.

Serving this demand, ultras utilize atmosphere as an affective-discursive terrain that encompasses people, place, and space—it is cultivated and modulated as a rhetorical device that harnesses emotive force as a pathway to public address. I return, then, to Deviants Ultras, who articulated this affective sociality underneath the swirling of green and black flags in Preußenstadion—

*Then you'll know, and you'll never forget
What I feel, and you'll never be alone.*

Ultras cultivate crowd sociality in order to facilitate its functionality as an affective rhetorical device. Collective action claims space through the public rupture of ordinary affects and the recalibration of the behavioral logics of public space. This discursive process exists in contrast to the idealizations of the public sphere as a space of rational-critical discourse. Performance contests and revises traditional notions of the public sphere. Rather than a metaphorical sphere in which the circulation of text is the dominant mode of discourse, ultras appropriate urban space and transform it into an affective-discursive terrain of public address. Graffiti, chants, flares—all are a part of a performative toolkit of public rupture and intervention. The smoke and bright orange light of marine flares that stain the surrounding space are the pinnacle of such fleeting urban transformations. The effect is that urban space is transformed into a physicalized public sphere.

Despite the ethnic and socioeconomic heterogeneity of ultras as a global phenomenon, the adoption and adaption of varied visual, sonic, and musical aesthetics harnessed through crowd support is key to identification with *ultra* as a transnational collective imaginary. The connection runs through the implicit domains of common experience—a shared understanding that is achieved across locality around an all-

encompassing lifestyle and societal positionality that calibrates support as *Lebensinhalt* [one's reason for being]. The sacrifice of free time, family, and romantic relationships is of particular salience for those that identify as ultras. The sincerity of one's participation is authenticated through one's time spent with the group. While "the daily work," as Matze put it, is to provide support in the stadium, it is the group lifestyle that provides a sincerity and emotive force to the atmosphere in the stadium. Lifestyle and collective mentality feed into every group's ability to effectively harness and modulate the atmosphere.

By considering atmosphere as an experiential and affective ecology—that which my interlocutors devoted their lives to harnessing—I am highlighting the ways in which discourse is conducted through participation and collective imaginaries are adjudicated in ways that circumvent the normative practices of citizenship in the public sphere. This style of collective action constitutes a foreign spectacle in urban space. *Ultra*'s ability to organize and coordinate affects challenges the established tenants of subjectivity and public address that constitute liberal democracy. Evidenced by the myriad apparatuses of governance present in the stadium space, the capacities of the crowd are instead viewed as a potential threat to order and public safety. *Ultra* violates the main tenants of modern citizenship by disregarding any adherence to rational-critical discourse, deconstructing the individual as the bedrock of democracy, and reorienting subjectivity toward action that is contingent upon the functionality of the collective rather than the needs or priorities of the individual. In this sense, the crowd conjured by ultras *is* illiberal in the sense that it does not embody the desired traits of the liberal democratic subject.

Atmosphere lies at the heart of this disjuncture. Ultras' performative tactics take into consideration space, sound, vibration, and cultural milieu as a means of cultivating the

affective and emotive dynamics of a place. It is from this orientation toward sociality that individuality as the bedrock of social formation begins to break down. In place of discourse that performs the rational-critical, affect and ideology are foregrounded and tightly intertwined in the stadium space as a means toward collective presentation. While the crowd is often interpreted as regressive, fascistic even, my goal in writing this dissertation has been to consider alternative social formations that attempt to adjudicate difference and harbor democratic ideals of collective determination. I am arguing that crowd action can serve as a completely different method in which to enact democratic principles—rife with new social possibilities, conflicts, and discrepant power dynamics. To actualize such a radical alternative requires constructing alternative modes of discourse within a marked territory that suspends the ordinary affects and the logics of public space—such as Block M in Dublin or at the Waldseite in the Stadium at the Alte Försterei. My aim throughout this dissertation has been to present three case studies in which ultras challenge the fundamental traits of public citizenship and the modes discourse, which are perceived as integral to the practice of the modern liberal democratic project.

Amidst the changing subjectivities of sports fans—and with it conceptions of normative fan praxis—ultras cultivate atmosphere as a stand-in for the absence of structured representation in the context of professional football. *Ultra* inverts the idolatry of modern sports fandom and its focus on players as icons, instead placing the supporters and their embeddedness in the historical and cultural milieu of the city as the ideological focal point of crowd action. Performance on the terrace is the process by which meaning is placed back upon the crowd itself. Collaboration with sports governing bodies compromises the purity of

the ultras ideological positionality against increasing commercialism and strategies aimed at increasing club and league revenue.

They campaigned for legal pyrotechnics in many countries and in Norway they got it, said Sal. And a lot of ultra groups realized, oh, fuck this isn't really what we wanted. Many groups don't want legal pyrotechnics because the whole act of rebellion and passion and fire is so sanitized. The controversy is gone. You can look in any country where they have these legalized pyro shows and it looks like shit (Personal Interview 2017).

The paradox, then, is that any change ultras wish to see must be done without joining any of the club administration or governing bodies that have the immediate power to change the parameters around the matchday experience in the stadium. Autonomy from authority authenticates the atmosphere and the sincerity of its content. Only in this way can the representational purity of atmosphere remain intact.

Ultra flaunts this outsidership with illegal flares and inflammatory banners [*Fuck You DFB!*]. Because the emotive valence of the crowd exists outside any institutional order, it remains uncompromised by the commercial prerogatives of the league and the club administration. The *ultra* groups in Berlin, for example, performed their outsidership in ways that underscored their ability to establish subversive and irrepressible ideology on the terrace despite league and government efforts to limit the expressive capacities of the fans and censor the content. At Hertha BSC on the West Side of Berlin, the ultras presented a banner naming themselves the *Hauptstadtmafia* [Capital City Mafia], while in the east the ultras at FC Union were a *Syndikat*. These expressive reminders publicly performed not only a lack of compliance, but asserted an alternative order, making public space a site in which sovereignty is contested by ultras and reasserted by the state through spectacles of violence. The dynamic tension between ultras and authority—that as Vico put it, *we are powerful and*

you can't break us—constitutes the mutually defining relationship between ultras and governing bodies that aim to manage deviancy and its discrepant affects.

At the crux of this conflict is a struggle around the management of affect in public spaces. Ultras' contempt for the normative logics of public space stokes anxieties around deviancy and public safety, instigating government tactics that seek to manage the affects of fans in and around the stadium space. Always with an eye toward impacting future events, ultras' impetus to collective action is to influence the affective dispositions of participants and athletes with hopes of propelling them to increased performance on the pitch. As such, modulating atmosphere is about cultivating particular outcomes. Through modulation and attunement, atmosphere is something to be calibrated in relation to the unfolding scenario—thus influencing its outcome. In other moments, atmosphere can recalibrate perception around the outcome of events [*If we remain quiet, then they've won!*]. Geared towards managing potentially inflammatory dispositions of participants around sporting events, myriad apparatuses of governance aim to prevent or preempt deviancy, often in ideologically contradictory ways. Rather than dampening the potentially inflammatory dispositions of fans, the impact on ultras is often one of increasing radicalization and insularity.

The political project undergirding my focus on *ultra* has been motivated by an interest in collectives that aim to create alternatives to consumption as its primary form of social practice and identity-building. My goal has been to highlight the authoritarian dimensions of governance, which manage subjectivities that extend outside the idealized parameters of liberal democratic citizenship. Undoubtedly, the ultras' attempts at collective organization and autonomy within the changing social landscapes of sports fandom are often intentionally inflammatory. David Graeber has noted that some of the most effective

insurrectionary spaces are the ones that we don't know about, in which "the stupidest thing one could possibly do is raise a red or black flag and make defiant declarations" (2004, 63-64). *Ultra*, however, is defined in part by what it opposes, and as such exists in perpetual relation to the cultural logics of capitalism and government attempts to diffuse the affective dispositions of the crowd. The irony at the heart of *ultra* is that in spite of many groups' democratic ideals of collective determination, their radical ethos of crowd support, in addition to their opposition to the state and capital place them as a tiny minority within the context of modern sports fandom. On the fringes yet out in the open, crowd action is the mode of cultural production in which these alternative ideologies and subjectivities are reproduced.

* * *

In the last few months of my fieldwork in the summer of 2017, I took a bus to Hamburg from Berlin to join Sal one last time for the protests against the G20 summit—an annual forum for the most influential governments and banks in the world. The event was being held in close proximity to the home ground of FC Saint Pauli—close to where my fieldwork began somewhat inauspiciously in 2015. The choice to host the summit in a city with a legacy of anarchist and left-wing thought seemed strange, and it was very clear that the state was gearing up for an all-out war on the streets between protesters and police for the duration of the multi-day event. Thousands of riot police were being shipped in from across the country in preparation for a heated environment in which physical violence was not seen as a possibility, but more of a presumed outcome. Antifascist protesters from around the world were traveling to be there as well, kicking off the event with a demonstration called "Welcome to Hell." Many antifascist ultras were there. I heard that Ultras Saint Pauli had

shown up for the march on the first day and I saw another ultra from the anarcho-communist group Ultras Hapoel Tel Aviv who had come all the way from Israel to Hamburg for the protest. For protesters, the summit symbolized a meeting of the global order that underscored states' commitments to neoliberalism as an ideological marriage of capitalism and governance.

Sal had just recently moved to Hamburg, so his friends from Deviants Ultras from Muenster had a place to crash in the evenings between marches and other events. Of special significance to protesters was the Schanzeviertel—a neighborhood located precariously close to the Hamburg Congress Center where the summit was taking place. The site of several squatted buildings, the Schanzeviertel had a gritty punk aesthetic and a history of far-left political activism whose cultural capital had ironically contributed to the gentrification of the neighborhood over time. Graffiti and stickers cover every building and the bathrooms of every bar. By Friday night we are standing inside the neighborhood with thousands of other protesters in a barricaded territory that has been taken from the police. Streets leading into the neighborhood are blocked by flaming debris in order to keep the trucks, vans, and teams of riot police out.

Standing with Sal and his friends, we drink beers in the street while watching black bloc protesters break into a supermarket chain and reemerge with a pallet of peaches, handing them out to passersby. We spot a SWAT team standing on the roof of an apartment building, dressed in camouflage with automatic rifles. Meanwhile, the police vans and water cannons accumulate several blocks away outside the barricades as other protesters throw stones to keep them at bay. Flames, smoke, and the vandalism of corporate property add an edge to a block party atmosphere on the streets. Kiosks selling beer and snacks are open and

the streets are packed. Not keen on getting arrested and brought to the specially constructed detention center for protesters, we eventually exit the barricaded zone late in the evening to get some sleep before more marches the next morning. I'm not sure at what hour the barricades were broken, but police presence was reestablished in the Schanzeviertel by the time we returned in the morning. It's another scream into the wind. Reaching into my pocket, I take out my phone and check the news.

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