

Power, space and the new stadium: the example of Arsenal Football Club

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### **Abstract**

In many sports, but especially professional soccer in the United Kingdom, clubs have recently relocated to new stadiums so as to meet new health and safety requirements and also develop new opportunities for income generation. The process of stadium relocation involves the emergence of new spaces that have implications for the power relations between stadium owners, managers and sport supporters. Existing studies provide a limited understanding of the changing nature of power relations in new stadiums. This paper reveals the power modalities and resources involved in the constantly changing new stadium spaces. A case study of Arsenal Football Club in London and the process of ‘Arsenalisation’ in the club’s new stadium reveals how material and virtual spaces are used by supporters to resist, confirm and negotiate the resources and practices of stadium managers seeking to control their activities.

### **Key words**

Stadium, spaces, power, modalities, resources, Arsenal

## **1. Introduction - new institutional arrangements and space in the stadium**

The stadium is often a site of considerable cultural and collective significance in many contemporary and historical urban landscapes (Gaffney 2008). The last two decades have witnessed the construction of new stadiums around the world often as part of urban regeneration and boosterism strategies (Euchner 1999, Bale 1995, Jones 2001, Austrian and Rosentraub 2002, Thornley 2002, Davies 2006, Collins et.al 2007) but also linked to mega sports events including the Olympics (Roche 2000, Ren 2008). Significant new spaces have emerged and Gaffney (2008) in a study of Argentina and Brazil argues that different cities and different sports give rise to contrasting stadium cultures and spaces.

New stadiums have been linked to broad globalizing processes as well as local cultural and political discourses (Ren 2008). The new spaces that emerge associated with new stadiums are, however, more than cultural and economic phenomenon. These spaces co-construct a set of power relations that fundamentally shape the evolving characteristics of a new stadium. By developing a power perspective it is possible to view stadium spaces as

dynamic processes that continually evolve as a result of power-based contestations and negotiations.

In the United Kingdom (UK) stadiums where professional soccer is played have been distinctively transformed often becoming multi-purpose venues used for other sports and business activities (Inglis 2003). Some of these changes arose from the government commissioned Taylor report in 1990 that examined the Hillsborough soccer ground disaster in 1989 when 96 supporters were killed and subsequently required football league clubs to develop all seater stadiums to improve health and safety conditions. Consequently, 26 of the 92 professional football league sides have directly relocated to a new stadium, whilst a further seventeen have been contemplating relocation.

The new stadiums are also linked to the emergence of new institutional and financial arrangements for professional soccer (Malcolm 2000) involving new very wealthy club owners, complex debt arrangements, increased television revenues, and clubs becoming publically listed companies on the stock exchange all of which have resulted in new approaches to the commodification and management of stadium spaces (Giulianotti 1999). The need to build new stadiums has also given rise in the construction sector to a

'stadium industry' (Inglis 2003). Partly in response to the emergence of new stadiums and these changes in the institutions of soccer, supporters have formed new groupings and Independent Supporters Associations now seek to influence the regulation and management of football clubs (Brown 1998, Nash 2001). These changes are also a response to a more general individualization process referred to as 'post fandom' (Redhead 1997) when supporters find their collective identities and activities having to adjust partly in response to increased television coverage and the more regulated stadium spaces with considerably higher ticket prices. This leads to new spaces emerging in and outside stadiums where supporters gather to develop collective experiences (Penny and Redhead 2009).

These adjustments in institutional arrangements associated with new soccer stadiums involve supporter collectives, an emergent building industry, changes in club ownership, new financial structures and government regulation and have prompted discussions of the associated power relations considered in the next section of this paper. This is followed by an analysis of the spaces of the new Emirates stadium home to Arsenal Football Club (FC) in London (the Emirates airline purchased the naming rights). This aims to highlight how the power relations between supporters and stadium institutions

are continually evolving as both groups use a range of resources to shape emergent spaces resulting in both shared and conflicting agendas.

## **2. Power, space, supporters and the stadium**

The long standing debates in social theory over what is power and the plurality of approaches to its study have been noted by numerous commentators (Haugaard 2002, Lukes 2005). For writers from different theoretical perspectives understanding power involves revealing not just what is transparent and constructed but also what is hidden and erased (Miller 2003). Discussions of power and stadiums, however, have often lacked some of the conceptual and lexical clarity both Hirst (2005) and Allen (2003) feel is essential to discussions of power, buildings and spaces. Initial perspectives on power and stadiums were developed by Bale (1993) and have since been enhanced by writers such as Giulianotti (1999) and Gaffney (2003 and 2008). Bale (1993) drew on Relph's (1976) views of placelessness and Augé's (1995) arguments about non-places to argue that an increasingly homogenized, standardized, concrete bowl stadium was contributing to the dominance of non-places in the urban landscape. For Bale (1993), influenced by Foucault's notion of the gaze, stadiums are described as evolving from

premodern permeable spaces and early modern enclosures to late twentieth century spaces that are 'safe, sanitized and surveilled'. This discussion of authority and discipline is pertinent to the new all seater stadiums in many parts of the world where many surveillance strategies are utilised, such as segregation, Close Circuit Television (CCTV), codes of behaviour and stewarding. Gaffney (2008 p.16) notes that these activities are linked to economic priorities as 'new stadiums have reached a high level of technological sophistication and organizational rigidity designed to extract maximum profit from fans....the generalized effect has been an atomization of the crowd, whereby social value is ascribed to an individuals capacity to consume'. The emergence of the 'tradium' (Bale 2000) and 'mallification' (Giulianotti 1999) which involves incorporating shops, restaurants, museums and conference facilities into stadiums are processes that have a long history in some north American stadiums (Belanger 2000) and have also been linked by city governments to local growth and regeneration strategies (Jones 2001, Davies 2006).

One of the challenges for writings on power and the stadium is the need to understand how power relations and spaces mutually co-construct each other so that new stadiums involve not only profit driven and technologically



managed sites but also the spaces and signifiers of cultural and emotional importance for the collective and individual identities of sports supporters. For soccer in the UK supporter identities have shifted in the last three decades as supporters have become less dominated by young working class males (Nash 2001). The lack of power supporters have to influence the regulation and management of UK soccer has been observed in a number of studies (Malcolm 2000) and of course many supporters of a soccer team will not necessarily regularly attend matches at a stadium. Much of the writing focusing on supporters in stadiums, however, has tended to rely on a range of metaphors to describe the supporter experience. The strength of feelings that some supporters hold for clubs and stadiums means that metaphors of ritual, pilgrimage, religion, and theatre have all been used to explore the experiential, emotional, sensory and affective dimensions of supporters' activities in stadiums (Bale 2000). These metaphors do not, however, necessarily reveal the power related practices and resources used by supporters to develop collective identities. Gaffney (2008 p.203), however, identifies the importance of collective memory and that 'clubs and stadiums function as sites and symbols of social memory, representation and meaning'. Bairner and Shirlow (1998) argue fan practices in stadiums can also contribute to local political identities. The social and cultural significance of a stadium can be

compromised, however, by profit driven trends in North America and Europe to sell the naming rights of stadiums in 'a maximization of the economic utility of stadium space that effectively routes public memory through corporate iconography' (Gaffney 2008 p.5). Collective memory, however, is open to multiple interpretations and representations. Penny and Redhead (2009) note that supporters can mobilize spaces to enhance shared memories in ways that are quite different to the approaches adopted by stadium owners and managers.

These discussions of emotional, affective and memorial experiences tend to portray supporters as often indulging in practices in opposition to the tactics of stadium institutions. This is hardly surprising given the concern in some writing to understand the nature of hooliganism which was clearly an activity stadium owners and police wished to minimise (Giulianotti et.al 2000). The power relations between supporters and stadium institutions, however, are often more complex with conflicting practices and strategies emerging alongside shared agendas especially the desire on match days to create team success and a sense of atmosphere and belonging. This set of power relations is not captured in writings on power and stadiums, that have tended to focus on the disciplining and manipulating effects of design, architecture,

management, regeneration strategies and institutions (Thornley 2002, Davies 2006, Ren 2008, Ahlfeldt and Maennig 2009). When the contribution of collective memory, feelings and the practices of supporters to the spaces of the stadium have been considered (Bale 1993, Young, 2003, Gaffney 2008) this is rarely linked to an explicit consideration of power and power relations. The result is often quite limited and static views of supporters in changing stadiums. Spectators are variously presented as surveilled and disciplined consumers either attracted to sporting venues by the corporatized new spaces, or marginalized individuals still involved in hooligan activity albeit often at locations outside the stadium (Giulianotti et.al 2000). These portrayals are of course valuable but the spaces of stadiums have been changing rapidly and thus the power relations will also be evolving with supporters playing complex roles that can be both oppositional and supportive of stadium institutions.

This paper seeks to reveal these power relations by developing a practice and resource based understanding of the geog power relations in a new stadium that acknowledges the varying roles played by supporters beyond that of being consumers or objects of surveillance. The physical and virtual spaces and the collective memory associated with stadiums are shaped by both institutions and supporters. The practices associated with spaces and memory are used as

a focus to explore changing power relations in a way that does not see supporters as simply resisting the strategies of stadium owners but instead recognizes that in a new stadium power relations will evolve as different collective groupings respond to each other.

### **3. Resources, practice, power and the new stadium**

In order to examine the role of practice and resources in stadium power relations it is necessary to adopt a more precise conceptual approach than has been used in many previous studies. Studies of power and space have often sought to analyze the power modalities that emerge by understanding how they are based upon the practices and resources that are mobilised. Allen (2003) argues that modalities of power include authority, domination, negotiation, coercion, inducement, manipulation, negotiation, persuasion and seduction and these are spatially specific arrangements which whilst based on practices cannot be understood as practices alone. Rather it is necessary to reveal how power is also organised through the mobilization of resources. Resource mobilisation is a key focus of power theory (Haugaard 2003) and Allen (2003: 63) stresses ‘the critical role that resources play in the generation of power as an effect’ but notes resource use is uncertain, can change

unpredictably and the degree of power not neatly linked to the scale of resources. Giddens (1984) argued that both authoritative and allocative resources will operate in social systems. Authoritative resources are linked to the environment and institutional structures whereas allocative resources stem from the organisation of space and time and often include knowledges (Giddens 1984)

In a new stadium authoritative resources will tend to coalesce around stadium institutions whose control and power arising from property and product rights is rooted in capitalist society and legal systems. Supporters and the stadium institutions can both draw on allocative resources arising from the spatial practices associated with the new stadium. Earlier studies have noted how the process of mobilizing the allocative resources of space and practice involves complex mutual dependencies, conflicts and negotiations by collective groupings aiming to utilise the same resource (Church and Coles 2007, Church et.al. 2007). It is important to avoid essentialising resources and it is not sufficient to identify their existence as it is how they are exercised which will influence the power modalities and spaces that emerge in a new stadium. Nevertheless, by adopting a conceptual focus on resources it is possible to ensure a practice based understanding of power relations by developing

insights into supporter practices and how these interact not just with other actors and institutions but also the uneven allocation and use of resources.

The case study of Arsenal FC and the new Emirates stadium was chosen because although it only opened in 2006 it is a major new stadium where, as is shown below, the struggles, practices and resources of stadium institutions and supporters have been evident in the initial years since opening. The methods used to examine the power relations relating to the Emirates stadium included a qualitative analysis of a range of on-line textual sources. These included club documentation concerned with the stadium, the official Arsenal FC website, the official monthly Arsenal FC Magazine, the minutes taken from the Arsenal FC supporters consultative forums which are held at the stadium three or four times a season, the documentation produced by the stadium designers and the on-line spaces where supporters express their views on the stadium and the practices at work. These on-line spaces include websites based on chat rooms, blogs and fans forums which, as the analysis below shows, have proved to be an important power resource for supporters for developing the possibilities of practice in new stadium spaces.

The on-line texts were downloaded into electronic documents which were then coded to identify key discussions of power resources and practices. Initially a basic Straussian approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was adopted that used open coding to identify key themes that were defined in reference to previous research on new stadiums. This was further adapted in the later stages of the analysis to use a more experiential coding technique (Crang, 2001) reflecting the researchers analysis of the virtual spaces which revealed the detail of the types of practices and spaces in and around the new stadium that were not readily identified in the previous research.

A key methodological challenge was the selection for analysis of the on-line sites used by supporters. The value and drawbacks of these sites as source of empirical data has been discussed by Millward (2008) who notes the importance of an initial analysis of sites available before an in-depth analysis of any particular site is undertaken. An analysis of all Arsenal supporter sites which contained either a fans forum or a supporter blog discovered fifty nine different web addresses, with thirteen of these sites being identified as containing a clearly indicated fans forum for on-line discussion rather than just a blog space. The number of such sites changes regularly and the websites selected for analysis were identified by an initial assessment of the nature of

the site, numbers and regularity of posts, length of time in existence and subjects discussed. This process identified two websites that had a range of postings that focused on the practices of supporters and were far more substantial in terms of posts and continuity than any others. These were the Arsenal 'REDaction' group website ([www.redaction.org.uk](http://www.redaction.org.uk) reflecting the club's shirt colour) and the igooner forum ([www.igooner.co.uk](http://www.igooner.co.uk) - a nickname for arsenal supporters). The former is an information site run by supporters and the latter a fans forum which hosts the REDaction fans forum pages within its domain. The empirical analysis focused on these two linked sites. The igooner site mainly involves on-line chat spaces. The Arsenal REDaction group website is maintained by Arsenal fans and is concerned with bringing supporters together to share ideas and practices around bringing atmosphere, noise, colour and fun to the new Emirates stadium which some felt was lacking compared to the former Highbury stadium. Some of those who maintain the site also liaise with stadium authorities and see the site as a facilitator to implement supporter led improvements in and around the stadium.

#### **4. The practice and power of shaping memory and culture: bringing the 'Old to the 'New'**



In July 2006 Arsenal FC officially made their relocation from Highbury stadium where they had been based since 1913. The club had spent £390 million constructing the Emirates stadium which was only 500 metres from the former Highbury stadium at a site known locally as Ashburton Grove. It has a capacity of 60,000 seats compared to fewer than 40,000 at the old stadium and the extra income provided by larger attendances was viewed as crucial to Arsenal remaining one of the leading English soccer clubs (<http://www.arsenal.com> 2004). The old Highbury stadium was converted into a residential development that included the conversion of some parts of the old stadium which were subject to conservation designations. The new Stadium has received a number of building and planning awards such as the Mayor of London's Award for Planning Excellence and over 100,000 visitors each year take one of the stadium tours, Whilst such awards and visits appear to reaffirm the legitimacy of the new stadium the relocation process met with significant opposition as several local resident and business groups were vehemently against the new development, and whilst any legal action taken was ultimately unsuccessful local resident concerns over traffic congestion and road closures have continued (<http://www.bbc.co.uk> 2007).

The relocation provided the club's owners and stadium managers with the opportunity to draw on a changed set of resources to shape the spaces and practices of the stadium especially in relation to crowd management and income generation. The Emirates contains the technologies of large screens, retail and hospitality spaces, and sophisticated crowd management and surveillance that Bale (1993) describes as the features of a panoptical and homogenised stadium. The Arsenal relocation, however, highlights how the power relations in a new stadium are not just shaped by technologies but are also influenced by the significant memorial and architectural resources stadium institutions can utilize partly to try and avoid creating the standardized spaces Bale (1993) described. These resources take the form of new place names, artifacts, mementoes and building features that refer to and signify the history of the former stadium at Highbury whilst contributing to maintaining stadium income by promoting a sense of belonging amongst supporters. Belanger (2000, p. 378) analysed the move of the Montreal Canadiens ice hockey argued that attempts to incorporate history into the new stadium were part of "marketing memories to sell spectacular sites" (Belanger, 2000:395). Gaffney (2008) , however, notes the importance of statues to both clubs and supporters in contributing to collective memories of spaces and history.

In the case of Arsenal FC a distinctive process has involved moving the ‘old to the new’ by incorporating a wide range of elements of the former Highbury stadium not only into the design and architecture of the new Emirates but also the surrounding street spaces. This provides a very specific moment for stadium institutions to draw on the resource of built features and signifiers to re-order not only the collective memory but also the spatial management of the stadium. Of course in other situations this resource based on history and collective memory will not be utilised by stadium institutions keen not reify the past as they wish to emphasise the significance of the new stadium (Howe and Underwood 1998). In the Arsenal case, however, the spaces of the new stadium and associated power relations were strongly shaped by the material and remembered features of the old Highbury stadium.

The merging of history and contemporary physical spaces involves both major architectural statements and a range of high profile measures which since August 2009 Arsenal FC and the national media have begun to refer to as the process of the ‘Arsenalisation’ of the new stadium (<http://www.arsenal.com> 2009 and [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) 2009). This process which emphasises the club’s history in the built environment also seeks to enhance match day

atmosphere and a sense of collective belonging. It is clearly part of a profit driven need to maintain demand for tickets but has also been a gradual response by the club to pressure from Arsenal supporter groups. The club would date the start of the process to the beginning of the 2009/2010 season three years after moving into the new stadium when before Arsenal's first home league game of the season, 58,000 red and white scarves were laid out over the home supporters seats, designed for them to be waved above their heads at kick off time. '12 Greatest Moments' in Arsenal's history walls have also been established inside the stadium using a series of images that were selected after fan's votes on the Arsenal official club website. The pattern of a white cannon has been produced among some of the seats in the lower level seats of the Emirates Stadium opposite the tunnel, whilst inside the lower concourses of the stadium, pictures and displays celebrating Arsenal's exploits in Europe, the clubs managers, its hat-trick heroes and a special players wall have also been introduced. On the outside of the stadium, eight large murals of well known Arsenal players have been erected leading to the cumulative effect of them embracing the stadium and the fans, whilst the 'Spirit of Highbury' shrine, has been introduced which is an image that features a line-up of the 482 first team players and 14 managers who were involved at Highbury between 1913-2006. Further activities within the

‘Arsenalisation’ process since its inception in the summer of 2009 shows that the Arsenal Club Level areas have also been ‘Arsenalised’. In relation to these areas of the stadium, the Arsenal FC C.E.O Ivan Gazidis states that “throughout all the spaces we have celebrated the club’s history and traditions, so that people feel they really are at the home of Arsenal” (<http://arsenal.com> 2010a). Other initiatives within the process have seen supporters being encouraged to design and produce their own banners to be displayed on the front of the upper tier of the stadium, whilst as part of activities to celebrate Arsenal FC’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in December 2011, fans memories of club legends have been detailed on the lower cores of the stadium. As a further part of these celebrations there has been the incorporation of special flags around the stadium which celebrate a section of fans that have a special story to tell about their support for Arsenal FC. Showing how the ‘Arsenalisation’ of the stadium is an on-going and evolving process, Ivan Gazidis states that “there is a lot more to do. This is just the beginning of the programme. I want the fans to come back and see more elements for them to be surprised by, so that everywhere you walk and everywhere you look you see pieces of our culture and history (<http://arsenal.com> 2010a).

The new architecture of the Emirates stadium predictably asserts the power of the stadium institutions over the emergent spaces. Within the design specification of the Emirates stadium, the club decided that they would use marble similar to that which decorated an art deco façade on the East Stand at Highbury. Marble walls with art deco design form the backdrop to the reception desks in both the club's administrative offices and the Diamond Club entrances which is the luxury suite. The list of Highbury references and signifiers appearing at the Emirates is long and includes the use of distinctive Highbury stadium lettering being copied at the Emirates and the incorporation Highbury's bronze entrance doors and wood paneling for the boardroom. In addition, it was also decided to take the 2.6 metres diameter clock that stood above the clock end terrace at Highbury and place this well known signifier, high up on the outside of the Emirates Stadium. A half sized replica of the clock was also incorporated within the Diamond Club at the Emirates Stadium. On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004, a time capsule containing thirty nine items of memories and keepsakes of Highbury was placed within the at the time under construction Emirates Stadium, whilst the clubs offices at the new stadium are officially called 'Highbury House' which contains a replica of the famous bust of the clubs legendary manager Herbert Chapman. The original still resides at the entrance to the old marble halls in the grade II – listed East Stand at

Highbury. Ken Friar an Arsenal board director argued that whilst the club “was extremely excited about the prospect of a fantastic new stadium with outstanding modern facilities, we felt that it was important to supporters and everyone involved with the club that some of the history and traditions of Highbury that are so intrinsic to Arsenal were replicated in our new home” (Arsenal magazine, March 2005: 32).

With some of the new stadiums in the United Kingdom suffering from a lack of character and individuality (Penny and Redhead 2009) the quote from Ken Friar indicates that Arsenal Football Club have brought these historical artifacts and signifiers with them from Highbury in part to encourage supporters to develop a familiarisation with the new stadium surroundings and to strengthen the collective memory and identity of the club. Clearly, this also involves ‘selling’ the past as Belanger (2000) describes in one of Montreal’s stadiums and some of the key design referents to Highbury are focused on the luxury Diamond club. The quote below from discussions on the analysed websites in reference to the new murals indicates the club’s agenda is shared by some supporters who want to feel a sense of collective belonging but they emphasise the role of supporters in supporting some, but by no means all, of these changes. “It’s nice to see all that history and all those memories of great

players and great moments in and around our new home, because I did think that the club moved on without making sure that they packed all the proud memories in the removal van” (<http://www.igooner.co.uk> 2008a). The built architecture and associated signifiers, however, are only one resource that the stadium owners, managers and supporters can use to assert their control over the new spaces. The naming of spaces has also been utilised but this is a process that has involved considerable contestation.

### **5. Power and naming stadium spaces**

The new Emirates stadium was separated from the nearest underground station by a railway line and two pedestrian bridges had to be built. In further reference to the club’s past, these were named the Clock End and North Bank bridges after the former terraces behind each goal at Highbury. Ken Friar the Arsenal director was keen to emphasise the value of these names and spaces to supporters suggesting “perhaps supporters who took their seats within those stands will enjoy meeting fellow Arsenal fans and friends on that respective bridge before matches at the Emirates stadium” (<http://www.arsenal.com> 2006a). Whilst this quote stresses the potential value of the bridge names for the practices and collective memory of supporters, the bridges also play an



important role in the practices of controlling supporters on match days. In order to manage a crowd of 60,000 the club and police have to take control of public streets and transport stations around the ground before and after an event. Names that extend the reach of the stadium institutions into surrounding spaces will contribute to legitimising this process of public space management.

The reactions of supporters to the naming of spaces stresses the need to understand how supporters individually and collectively draw on resources to develop practices and spaces in a new stadium that are expressive of supporter agency rather than the power of the stadium institutions. The analysis of web site blogs, chat rooms and fans forums used by Arsenal supporters show how on-line spaces have become important resources for supporters seeking to shape the physical spaces of the new stadium as well as the collective memories associated with both Highbury and the Emirates. In 2003 nearly 1,300 Arsenal fans completed an on line A.I.S.A (Arsenal Independent Supporters Association) stadium survey and 85% were opposed to selling 'naming rights' for the new stadium. The new economic arrangements of English soccer, however, meant that on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2004 when Arsenal FC announced that the new stadium would be known for at least the first fifteen

years of its operation as the Emirates stadium due to a £100 million sponsorship deal with the Emirates airline company. This lucrative naming rights deal has been debated by supporters of fan forums often acknowledging the financial necessity whilst highlighting the consequences for collective identity. Barry Baker, secretary of the clubs official supporters club argued before the relocation took place that “the new name has no connection to Arsenal whatsoever. The tradition has gone. We were all hoping it would be called Ashburton Grove or maybe Emirates Highbury. We’ll get over it but I can see many fans calling it Ashburton Grove rather than the Emirates stadium” (Cited in Warshaw, 2004). Since Arsenal took up residency messages on fans forum sites have discussed Ashburton Grove, the Grove, New Highbury, and Highbury ii as alternative names. One supporter simply stated that “Ashburton Grove it is for me, or simply Arsenal’s ground” (<http://www.igooner.co.uk> 2008b)

This disenchantment, however, also confirms that to some degree the supporters share the stadium institutions wish to use references to Highbury to affirm identity and memory. For the stadium institutions this has been pursued through signifiers and artifacts but for some supporters this is not sufficient and names that reflect the past for the new stadium and places within it are

also desirable. Also whilst supporters maybe unable to resist the corporately driven naming process they are able to develop practices that to some degree subvert this process and develop their own informal links to the remembered Highbury. Threads on fans forum pages in 2005 a year before the Emirates stadium opened showed discussions regarding the naming of the stands at each end of the new stadium which were to be called the North and South stands. The fans forums contained numerous discussions regarding the need to develop alternative names for these new stands with suggestions of calling the new North Stand the 'North Bank' and the new South Stand the 'Clock End', in reference to the old stands at each end of the former Highbury. Such attempts to re-forge Highbury identities and spaces in the new stadium in on-line spaces, are then visible through practices in the stadium with supporters flags appearing at matches in the North Stand saying 'North Bank' and other references to this particular area of Highbury through the songs sung by the crowd. This on-going contestation of the naming of spaces indicates how the resource of on-line spaces opens up opportunities for supporters to develop practices in the stadium itself that challenge the spatial strategies of the stadium institutions. As a result of this informal naming and pressure from supporters the club officially announced in July 2010 that as part of the on-going 'Arsenalisation' the names of the stands from Highbury will be

introduced into the Emirates stadium in 2010. (<http://www.arsenal.com> 2010b).

In terms of power relations the supporter practices cannot be interpreted as simply resistive acts to stadium managers and owners seeking to corporatise and control the spaces of the new stadium. The supporters whilst rejecting some of the names for the spaces of the new stadium are also, like the stadium institutions, drawing on the resource of the club's history to enhance collective memory. In this way the shared and conflicting agendas of supporters and stadium institutions become entwined with consequent implications for the power relations that emerge in the new stadium. This is particularly noticeable through the connections between on-line spaces and the supporters' use of match day practices and spaces as resources which are analyzed further in the next section.

## **6. Practices, virtual spaces and the REDaction Group**

The collective practices of supporters that have emerged on match days draw on a loosely composed set of spatial resources that include on-line spaces, the seated areas especially in the new north stand (Bank) and the socializing

spaces inside and outside the stadium. Much of the collective activity is organized through the Arsenal 'REDaction group' which works closely with facets of the club itself but stress they are an independent organisation with the mission statement "to bring Arsenal back to its faithful fans and buck the trend of growing indifference in English club football" (<http://www.redaction.org.uk> 2010b). A key aim is to bring more atmosphere, fun and noise to Arsenal on match days which many of those posting on the igooner website feel could be improved: "it is right that the atmosphere in Club Level is shocking! You get the dirtiest looks aimed at you for basically supporting your team and having a sing as if it's wrong" (<http://www.igooner.co.uk/> 2009b).

Some of those posting on and maintaining the REDaction group website meet in 'The Rocket', a public house close to The Emirates Stadium, which is REDaction's 'official' pre and post-match bar. It is through this social meeting place, and the group's website that events and activities are coordinated to try to inject a sense of atmosphere to the new stadium. By working in conjunction with the stadium managers, one of REDaction group's first initiatives was the creation of around 550 seats in the stadium designated for REDaction registered members to encourage practices involving waving

scarves, flags and chanting to create more noise and identity expression. This appears to be an evolving process however, that involves an engagement with a range of different other socialising spaces. After an Arsenal home game in September 2007, REDaction planned a 'meet and greet' inside the bar area close to the Redsection with the intention of encouraging singing and getting feedback about how fans in this area can improve atmosphere. The REDaction group practices, despite being in a designated space, have encountered restrictions arising from complaints to stadium staff from some supporters sitting in the section regarding people standing. The REDaction group feel that there has been a zero tolerance approach from the authorities within the stadium on issues such as singing and standing up, with this issue being presented to club management at an official supporters consultative forum held at the stadium (<http://www.arsenal.com> 2006b). Some supporters have been thrown out of this section for persistent standing and clearly regulation and control remains central to the management of the match day spectacle.

REDaction have continued with their activities and tried to make waving scarves a regular feature for all night games. The use of chants and songs has declined in the new stadium compared to Highbury and for the 2008/2009 season a 'chant of the month' was introduced by REDaction and there is a

‘drawing board’ on the website where chants and songs can be learned. The group also now organise the regular pre-match and post match ‘Rocket March’ between the stadium and the public house giving a visual and vocal demonstration of their presence. To show the continuing activity of the group, prior to certain matches in the 2008/2009 season, meetings were organised within ‘The Rocket’ pub to try to come up with new ideas to take to the club themselves, if necessary, or if they are workable without the club’s assistance to promote new activities through REDaction’s own members. One such idea which REDaction took to the club themselves was to bring the former Highbury stadium Clock End clock back into the stadium from its current position from high up on the outside of the stadium. In a partial result for fan activism, a new Clock End clock, which is similar, but larger in appearance than the old Highbury timepiece has been introduced into the new Clock End of the Emirates stadium, with its re-introduced Highbury named stands, for the start of the 2010/2011 season. The quote below acknowledges the role in these changes of supporter collectives and on-line discussion: “The new clock is far larger so that it does not look like a wrist watch in terms of the size of the stadium. Well done to all who campaigned so long and hard to get the clock back. REDaction are producing some commemorative T-shirts to be given out prior to the Blackpool game” (<http://www.igooner.co.uk> 2010)

The on-going development of the REDaction group's activities and ideas illustrates how the attempts to build a sense of place and collective identity within the new stadium spaces are a central concern of supporters and similar issues are keenly felt at other new British soccer stadiums (Penny and Redhead 2009). The resources the group draw on involve virtual spaces and a range of spaces internal and external to the stadium but their practices are still significantly constrained by the match day controls and management in the stadium. Their goals of injecting colour, noise and identity in new stadium all-seater spaces would no doubt be shared by the stadium institutions but practices that involve standing and singing are often restrictively managed. The power relations that emerge mean the REDaction group often seek to develop activities jointly with stadium management but equally their members come into conflict with stadium staff who manage seating areas on match days to prevent people standing. The authority of the stadium institutions is asserted by crowd control, codes of practice for behaviour and the threat of ejection from the ground.

## **7. Conclusions: power relations and compromise**



The 500 meter relocation from Arsenal's old venue at Highbury to the new Emirates stadium indicates the complex power relations and modalities that may emerge in the new stadiums and the need to develop a power perspective on the contemporary stadium that does more than view it as a panopticalised space run by owners and managers intent on using authority and domination to manage either passive, consumer-supporters or resistive hooligans. There are shared and conflicting desires amongst supporters and stadium institutions that result in geographically specific sets of power relations which result in continual changes in the spaces of the new stadiums. Supporters may lack power in influencing many aspects of modern sport (Malcolm 2000) but they can draw on a range of resources to attempt to shape new stadium spaces. In the case of the Emirates, the stadium institutions through their use of authoritative resources (Giddens 1984) based on property and product ownership have sought to incorporate historical reminders, artifacts and signifiers of the old Highbury in the new stadium spaces thereby not only reinforcing a collective memory amongst supporters based on the traditions and histories but also generating income through activities linked to executive suites, business conferences and visitor tours. The practices of supporters indicate that many share aspects of this agenda and value the new spaces that contribute to their sense of attachment to the club and the collective memory

linked to Highbury. Indeed, the on-going contestation of the selling of the stadium naming rights to Emirates airline was based on the supporters' desire for a new name that maintained the past links to Highbury. Similarly fans have developed colloquial names for parts of the new stadium that draw on the names of spaces in Highbury. The supporters' contestation of some aspects of the memorialisation process in the buildings and spaces of the new stadium cannot simply be seen as an act of resistance because for some the process could have been extended and involve, as well as artifacts and signifiers, the use of the old stand names from Highbury in the new stadium.

Clearly some of what has taken place at Arsenal FC is distinctive to the club's history and the stadium's location but it offers an example of how stadium institutions and supporters use the same resources in different ways to develop a sense of collective belonging suggesting that new stadiums are perhaps more complex spaces than the placeless homogenised arenas Bale (1993) suggested would emerge. In addition, both the stadium authorities and the supporters at Arsenal had recognised the potential negative implications for attendances and supporter willingness to pay ticket prices if match days in the new Emirates stadium lacked atmosphere. Thus collective supporter groups have emerged that through practices involving on-line and physical spaces seek to ensure

that atmosphere, colour and noise are enhanced in the in new stadium spaces. Their actions can bring them into conflict with stadium staff seeking to maintain match day conformity especially in relation to supporters standing in all seater areas.

The allocative, as opposed to authoritative, resources (Giddens 1984) that supporters draw on involve intersecting virtual and physical spaces including the viewing and hospitality areas in the stadium, social spaces in and outside the venue and websites hosting blogs, chat rooms and fans forums. The resulting power relations that emerge highlight the authority of stadium institutions over the physical spaces, design, architecture and management of the new stadium. The supporters, however, may value many of these controlled physical spaces for their historical resonances or spectacular features but they can also draw on a range of resources to change or challenge the memorialising and controlling aspects of the new stadium by using their own names for new spaces and encouraging their preferred practices for match days. In this way new collective groupings of fans have emerged that replace old networks of fans often based on kinship, friendships and community connections (Redhead 1997).

In such a situation the process of naming power modalities encouraged by theories of power (Allen 2003) becomes challenging. In the new stadiums of British soccer the monumental architecture and technologies are the setting for continually evolving power relations based on supporter and institutional agendas that are both shared and conflicting. The power modalities of authority and domination are clearly evident in the practices of stadium managers and owners asserting authority over space through surveillance, crowd control, stewards and policing. Co-present with these practices, stadium institutions seek to use resources linked to naming and memorialisation in the new spaces to encourage a sense of attachment and collective identity amongst supporters. Supporters will be closely involved in this process not simply as consumers but as active individuals and collective groupings that include formal organisations liaising with stadium institutions and informal collectives often using on-line spaces to interact. At the same time supporters utilise on-line and physical spaces to develop their desired spatial practices, distinct remembrances and sense of belonging. The actions of supporters are not encapsulated by notions of power as resistance as they often share the agenda's of stadium institutions. Allen's (2003) power modalities of seduction and negotiation only partly capture the power relations that emerge. Supporters are acutely aware of the seductive

dimensions to the practices of stadium institutions and are prepared to negotiate these through their own practices and use of resources. In keeping with notions of power as both conflictual and consensual (Haugaard 2002) the power modality that emerges in the new stadium might be better described as compromise. Supporters and stadium institutions not only negotiate but they will seek to influence practices and spaces through joint agreed actions and at other times through contestation. The outcomes can involve stadium institutions asserting authority, such as preventing supporters standing in seating areas, but also involve compromises over naming and the use of spaces in and around the stadium. Untangling power relations in major new stadiums, therefore, requires identifying co-present power modalities whilst also understanding how resource mobilisation involves the interactions between physical spaces and the on-line worlds that are implicated in the spatial practices of supporters and stadiums managers.

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