



**The rebels of FC St. Pauli in the commodified world of football: a dialogue between  
Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway**

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“Going down to the depth of language, and rising to the height of emphasis, during an interspace of silence, I interrogated the revolutionist and philosopher in these fateful words, ‘What is [the final law of being]?’ And it seemed as though his mind were inverted for a moment while he looked upon the roaring sea in front and the restless multitude upon the beach.

‘What is?’ I had inquired, to which, in deep and solemn tone, he replied: ‘Struggle!’

At first, it seemed as though I had heard the echo of despair; but, peradventure, it was the law of life.”

(Interview with Karl Marx by John Swinton, 1880)

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## ABSTRACT

Through a bibliographical research, this thesis proposes a dialogue between the authors Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway on the possibility of recognizing critical potentialities against capitalism in the context of football. For this, the experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli was used as a background, seeking to understand it from the critical contributions of the authors. This historical experience present in the FC St. Pauli fan community emerged in the 1980s and seeks to keep its anti-capitalist, anti-fascist and anti-systemic principles alive until today through projects, campaigns and protests, at the same time that is crossed by contradictions and challenges. Thus, it is a relevant sphere in the world of football to be analyzed under different lenses of Marxist thought. In this sense, while John Holloway works with Karl Marx's categories such as totality and social form, emphasizing an aspect of dynamic struggle against the process of cohering to the logic of the capitalist system, Jean-Marie Brohm, a sociologist of sport, works with the notion of "opium of the people", by critically reflecting on the depoliticizing function of modern sports as mass spectacles, such as football. Throughout this thesis, it became evident that although both are influenced by the thought of Karl Marx, their theoretical productions have fundamental differences, culminating in different possible interpretations of the particular experience of FC St. Pauli's rebel fans within the capitalist totality.

**Keywords:** Social forms. Capitalism. John Holloway. Crack. Football. Jean-Marie Brohm. Opium. FC St. Pauli. Rebel.

## RESUMO

Através de uma pesquisa bibliográfica, esta dissertação propõe um diálogo entre os autores Jean-Marie Brohm e John Holloway sobre a possibilidade de se reconhecer potencialidades críticas ao capitalismo no contexto do futebol. Para isso, utilizou-se a experiência dos torcedores rebeldes do FC St. Pauli como um plano de fundo, buscando compreendê-la a partir das contribuições críticas dos autores. Essa experiência histórica presente na comunidade torcedora do FC St. Pauli surge nos anos de 1980 e busca manter seus princípios anticapitalistas, antifascistas e anti-sistêmicos vivos até a atualidade através de projetos, campanhas e protestos, mesmo atravessada por contradições e desafios. Assim, é um âmbito relevante no mundo do futebol para ser analisado sob diferentes lentes do pensamento marxista. Nesse sentido, enquanto John Holloway trabalha com categorias de Karl Marx como totalidade e forma social, dando ênfase a um aspecto de luta dinâmica contra o processo de cohering à lógica do sistema capitalista, Jean-Marie Brohm, um sociólogo do esporte, trabalha com a noção de “ópio do povo”, ao refletir criticamente sobre a função despolitizadora dos esportes modernos como espetáculos de massa, como é o caso do futebol. Ao longo desta obra fica evidente que apesar de ambos serem influenciados pelo pensamento de Karl Marx, suas produções teóricas possuem diferenças fundamentais, culminando em diferentes interpretações possíveis sobre a experiência particular dos torcedores rebeldes do FC St. Pauli no interior da totalidade capitalista.

**Palavras-chave:** Formas sociais. Capitalismo. John Holloway. Crack. Futebol. Jean-Marie Brohm. Ópio. FC St. Pauli. Rebel.

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## INTRODUCTION

The master's thesis that will be presented in the sequence is the result of a bibliographical research, especially through the works of Jean-Marie Brohm, John Holloway and other authors who dealt with the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans.

The main objective was to propose a dialogue between Brohm and Holloway, thinkers situated in the critical theoretical field of Marxism, on the possibility of recognizing critical potentialities against the capitalist system in the context of football-spectacle. For this, the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans was brought as a particular within the universal and reflected from the ideas of these authors.

With this focus, the journey began with a proposal to understand the thought of John Holloway, an author situated in more recent schools of Marxism such as "Open Marxism" and "New Marxism". In this sense, through a theoretical basis about social forms of capitalism, this thesis advanced to Holloway's production specifically, a moment when the open-question concept of "crack", as movements of in-against-and-beyond within the totality itself, emerged as a possibility to be related to the rebel fans.

Next, it was deemed necessary to understand the dynamic relationship between football and capitalism. Therefore, there was an approach to understand the context of the establishment of modern sports in capitalist industrial society, the emergence of institutionalized and professional football, together with its transformation into a mass spectacle sport under the influence of the material transformations in the communications sector.

With this basis regarding football, the thesis moved to the critique of Jean-Marie Brohm, a sport sociologist situated in a Marxist tradition who understands the institution of modern sport as an Ideological State Apparatus in which football is part of. In this sense, Brohm uses the notion of "opium of the people" to characterize one of the political-ideological functions assumed by football, a massive modern sport that is extremely "contagious" and, through this function, ends up depoliticizing people, moving them away from their real social problems faced in capitalism.

In the following moment, the thesis went through to an approach on the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans, both its historical consolidation in the 1980s as anti-systemic, anti-capitalist and anti-fascist, as well as its presence in the actions of the fan community in recent decades, through protests, campaigns, and social projects engaged in the district. With

this mentality, a group of more active fans, inside and outside the stadium, seeks to keep the rebellious “flame” burning, and, in addition to cheering for their club, they use football as an instrument for dissemination, awareness and engagement in political causes.

Reaching the end of the journey, a resumption of the ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway was carried out, and a dialogue was proposed based on possible interpretations of this rebelliousness experience. While the influence of Marx allows a “bridge” between these thinkers, throughout the work their differences became evident, especially when reflecting on the rebel fans and what this means to the capitalist totality. It is understood that this thesis can open paths, especially in the use of John Holloway’s thought for research that seeks to understand the potentiality of anti-capitalist movements in the context of the commodified world of football. It is hoped that the reading will be satisfactory, criticism is always welcome.



## 1 SOCIAL FORMS OF CAPITALISM AND THE CRACKS FOR JOHN HOLLOWAY

### 1.1 SITUATING THE CHAPTER

Moving from abstract to concrete, the purpose of this chapter is to bring forth John Holloway's critical reflection regarding capitalist sociability and its social forms with his approach of in-against-and-beyond movements, “cracks” that seek to resist the force of cohering imposed by this social totality we are all part of.

Subsequently, the ideas worked here will make it possible to build a dialogue with Jean-Marie Brohm's Marxist critique of football and the experience of the rebels of FC St. Pauli, elements that will be brought in the next chapters.

For Alysso Mascaro, a Brazilian legal philosopher, John Holloway is part of a school he calls “New Marxism”. This proposed classification by Mascaro tries to encompass a trend of recent works that focus on Karl Marx's highest theoretical production: *Capital* (Mascaro, 2022, p. 331).

Despite its differences, this grouping has a point of convergence: the search to “reach the readings of the social forms of capitalism” (*ibid*, p. 333). Therefore, the study of the commodity-form, the value-form, the money-form, the state political form and the legal form are basic components of works that are part of this classification. Based on influences from Louis Althusser, Evgeny Pashukanis, and Isaak Rubin, “New Marxism” is divided by Mascaro into three fundamental axes, and a tangent one, to establish the critique of capitalist sociability.

The fundamental axes directly analyze current political, social and economic problems and challenges. They are grouped by Mascaro in: Derivationisms; Alternativisms and New Criticism of Value. The tangent axis, on the other hand, is a field in which the works partially address themes of contemporary Marxism (Mascaro, 2022, p. 333).

According to Mascaro, John Holloway is an author who is located on two axes, the axis of “Derivationisms” and the axis of “Alternativisms”.

In that regard, Holloway participated in theoretical debates about the derivation of the form of the State and the form of Law to capitalist social relations (Mascaro, 2022, p. 333). In this thesis, those debates of Derivationism cannot be deepened, however, a work that brilliantly exposes its complexity is the one of Caldas (2021).

For Mascaro, John Holloway is also part of the political “Alternativisms” axis. In his perspective, thinkers in this field recognize that the overcoming of capitalism cannot be achieved through its own social forms. Thus, groups should not merely seek the dispute for state power or an improvement of the law, but rather recognize political alternatives within the very sociability structured by those forms (Mascaro, 2022, p. 338). In this sense, the experience of the Zapatista movement in their struggle for autonomy against the state and capitalism has a great influence in Holloway’s critical construction, as demonstrated in his work “Changing the world without taking power” (2002).

It is also possible to state that John Holloway is part of a school of Marxism called “Open Marxism”. Starting in the 1990s, a trilogy of the same name was released with two important articles by Holloway (1992; 1995). This collection was resumed in 2020 with a new contribution by him (Holloway, 2020).

From an understanding of Marxism as a theory of struggle (Bonefeld, 2020, p. 3), “open” for this school of thought means opening up Marx’s categories, debates, spaces of critique, and follow the flows of struggle, aiming new political possibilities (*ibid*, p. 4).

The opening of Marx’s categories, especially those present in “Capital”, is a new attempt to understand them not as predetermined laws, but as dynamic conceptions that exist from the flow of class struggle in reality (*ibid*, p. 2). Thus Marx’s notion of the unity between theory and practice becomes paramount (*ibid*, p. 5).

In general, this school aims to deny both the capitalist mode of production and the dogmatic closure of its categories. It is a critique that analyzes the very internal contradictions of capitalism, trying to “explore money, capital, the state, the law, and so on, as forms of struggle from above and, therefore, open to resistance and rebellion.” (Bonefeld, 2020, p. 3).

Whether as an author of a “New Marxism” or an “Open Marxism”, the important thing here will be to understand how the study of social forms makes itself present in Holloway’s reflection and what is the result of this for his philosophical construction. In summary, his analysis can be classified as a creative and original combination between derivationism, critical theory, Zapatismo, and the autonomist tradition (Grubačić, 2016, p. 13), focusing on the openness of Marx’s categories and emphasizing movement, instability, and especially the diverse struggles that occur within capitalist totality.

## 1.2 WHAT ARE SOCIAL FORMS?

Before getting into Holloway's work specifically, it is fundamental to bring a basis to understand what social forms are, since it is a category with a major impact for his reflection.

With that in mind, Alysson Mascaro himself has made a great contribution in the study of social forms. Under the main influences of Joachim Hirsh, Louis Althusser and Evgeny Pashukanis, Mascaro builds a fundamental basis to understand the forms, together with his critical argument regarding the political-legal complex of capitalist society.

According to the Brazilian author, whenever relations of production of the same type become dominant in a society, the result is the emergence of social forms. These forms are not prior to the concrete material relations, as an "a priori" of reason, or mere categories of thought. In reality, they are established from the material relations themselves, through a historical and social process of repetition, creating a "format" that will be cyclically replicated in the next social relations (Mascaro, 2013, p. 21-22).

Through a process of mutual intermingling, social forms emerge from the reiteration of social relations of production, but at the same time they structure them. Therefore, forms end up reproducing themselves, feeding their own existence. It is possible to say that social forms are relational formats that give meaning to and objectify the social relations from which they arise. In other words, like a "mold" that fills itself with various contents and determines its shapes, social forms imperatively determine what the shape of social relations between individuals, groups, and classes will be (*ibid*, p. 21).

They appear to us as an "already given world", not depending on our will (*ibid*, p. 24). We are born and grow up within this sociability and therefore our relations appear "natural" because the forms make them intelligible, structured. However, social forms are only historical constructs, they are not permanent. If the social relations of production change, the capitalist forms will be replaced by new social forms (Mascaro, 2013, p. 20-21).

In summary, Mascaro defines "social form" as follows:

To use an expression of Marx, behind the backs of individuals pass a series of social constructs. The appropriation of capital, the sale of labor power, money, commodity, value are forms constituted by the social interactions of individuals, but they are greater than their isolated acts or their will or consciousness. Social forms are relational modes that constitute social interactions, objectifying them. It is a process of mutual imbrication: social forms come from social relations, but end up being their necessary marks. (Mascaro, 2013, p. 20-21) (own translation).

Together, they configure the core of capitalist sociability. They interact among themselves and create a cohesive complex that consolidates practices, deliberations and

expectations (Mascaro, 2013, p. 24). This complex is dynamic, sometimes conflictive and contradictory, but in the end, it always has a gravitational axis: the prevailing relations of production.

The continuous flow of the entire system is dependent on capitalist social forms, they are fundamental to the process of exchange value, not only economically, but also in the political, social and legal sphere (Mascaro, 2013, p. 20).

Now, with a clearer definition of what social forms are, it is possible to move on to each of the typical forms of capitalist sociability cited by Mascaro: the commodity-form; the value-form; the money-form; the legal form and the state political form.

In that regard, it is possible to state that there is a kind of “gravitational force” around the commodity-form:

In the social dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, what is similar to the gravitational field is the commodity form; it is the structuring and organizational determination of concrete social relations in capitalism. Just as the earth’s gravitational field acts concretely on everything and everyone that exists within the limits of the earth, the determinations of the commodity form concretely affect everything and everyone that has its existence constituted under the capitalist mode of production.(Nardelli, 2021) (own translation).

However, as will be seen, this does not mean that the commodity-form is isolated from the others, in reality they are all reciprocating each other’s existence in a cohesive system. For its establishment, the commodity-form inevitably needs the others.

Also, although this analogy may be appropriate, it must come with the warning that while the social forms are historical and changeable, the same is not true with the physical law, product of that gravitational field (Nardelli, 2021).

### 1.2.1 Around the commodity-form

In the first paragraph of the first chapter of “Capital”, Karl Marx writes: “The wealth of societies where the capitalist mode of production rules appears [*erscheint*] as an ‘enormous collection of commodities’, and the individual commodity, in turn, appears as its elementary form.” (Marx, 2017, p. 113) (own translation).

In capitalist society, physical things, products of labor, which satisfy human needs “of the stomach or of the imagination” (Marx, 2017, p. 113) (own translation), assume a form of commodity. The commodity-form represents the core of this sociability, the atom of this great

relational complex. As an atom, it can be further “broken” down into two subatomic particles, use-value and value (Melo, 2022, p. 15).

Use-value, in short, “corresponds to the utility of the commodity (Marx, 2013, p. 114), to its ability of satisfying human needs that are historically determined.” (Melo, 2022, p. 15) (own translation). This aspect is conditioned by its physical properties, its material “body”, and its effectiveness for its use or consumption (Melo, 2022, p. 15).

However, besides its physical property, the existence of a capitalist social relation to produce the commodity ends up filling it with a social “substance” called value. The social form of value makes the exchange between commodities possible because they all carry the same substance, differing only in the quantity carried, which is determined by the amount of labor that is socially necessary for the production of each of the commodities (ibid).

Considering use-value as the physical “body” of the commodity, value, by analogy, can be understood as the “soul” that makes up this body. It is like a “sticker” that sticks to the physical properties of the thing, and makes it acquire a social characteristic. This does not happen because of its natural properties, but because of the social relations to which commodities are bound in their capitalist production (ibid, p. 16).

Yet, although value is expressed in reality through exchange-value, this is only its mode of expression, exchange-value should not be understood as a component part of the commodity (Marx, 2017, p. 136).

In a simplified scheme, it is possible to say that the commodity has an internal duplicity, it is at the same time value-form + the natural physical form of the thing:

Commodities come into the world in the shape of use-values, articles, or goods, such as iron, linen, corn, &c. This is their plain, homely, bodily form. They are, however, commodities, only because they are something two-fold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value. They manifest themselves therefore as commodities, or have the form of commodities, only in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form, and a value-form. (Marx, 1887, Ch. 1).

The exchange relations between commodities become possible through value, which ends up serving as a parameter of comparison. Thus, the value-form and the commodity-form are in a constant relationship of dependence, the value composes the commodity and, at the same time, only arises by the exchange relations of the commodities themselves (Mascaro, 2013, p. 23).

However, the comparative equivalence provided by value is only possible through another social form: the money-form.

The money-form works as a common measure that makes the equivalence and circulation of commodities possible historically. Its functionality is fundamental for the commodity-form, it serves as a manifestation of value. While value gives commodities the capacity to be commensurable with one another, money is the necessary form of manifestation of this capacity (Marx, 2017, p. 169).

Whether it is gold, paper money, numbers in a virtual account, the most important thing is not its various historical existences, but the functional capacity of money: “The transfer of money from the hands of some to others is only a means for the transfer of goods. In this case, 'its functional existence absorbs, so to speak, its material existence' (C., I, p. 87).” (Rubin, 1987, p. 26) (own translation).

But all these mercantile forms are not enough for the composition of capitalist sociability. As Marx stated, commodities do not go alone to the market to be exchanged (Marx, 2017, p. 159), it is a social process in which individuals relate to each other. Therefore, the commodity-form needs to derive in social forms that structure relations of trade and production between people, they are: the legal form and the state political form.

Besides being a collection of commodities, capitalist society is a large network of legal relations: “In as much as the wealth of capitalist society appears as ‘an immense collection of commodities’, so this society itself appears as an endless chain of legal relations” (Pashukanis, 2003, p. 85).

And in the same way that value ensures the equivalence of commodities, the legal form, through its core “subject of law”, emerges historically to provide the equivalence of people involved in social relations (Mascaro, 2013, p. 39). Evidently, this equivalence is just an abstraction that ends up camouflaging the material inequality of our present sociability.

Thus, it is from the relations themselves that law acquired this historical form, and not the other way around. The current form of law consolidates an “impersonal” and objective legal system that guarantees formal equivalence between those involved in social relations of trade and production, guaranteeing a daily reproduction of these relations.

As of this interpretation, the legal form is not something ahistorical, metaphysical or that is merely constituted through norms, but something that arises typically as a result of the capitalist mode of production.

Hence law in its general definitions, law as a form, does not exist in the heads and the theories of learned jurists. It has a parallel, real history which unfolds not as a set of ideas, but as a specific set of relations which men enter into not by conscious choice, but because the relations of production compel them to do so. Man becomes a legal subject by virtue of the same necessity which transforms the product of

nature into a commodity complete with the enigmatic property of value. (Pashukanis, 2003, p. 68)

The commodity exchange itself creates the idea of autonomous carriers of legal claims. As a historical process, people become “subject of rights” that engage with an abstract formal equality, protecting their individual interests and on opposite sides of contracts. This is the basis of the legal system.

Also, in constant connection with the legal form is the state political form. The state, as we currently know, is an apparatus that typically emerges in the capitalist mode of production as a third party that guarantees its social relations (Mascaro, 2013, p. 18-19).

Therefore, for Mascaro, the state is not an impartial entity that was coupled by the capitalists and could eventually be used as an instrument for overcoming this mode of production. On the contrary, its very form of existence is historical and necessary to capitalism:

Due to the mercantile circulation and the subsequent structuring of the whole society on exchange parameters, the State emerges as a third party in relation to the dynamics between capital and labor. This third party is neither an addendum nor a complement, but a necessary part of capitalist reproduction itself. Without it, the dominion of capital over wage labor would be direct dominion - therefore, slavery or servitude. (Mascaro, 2013, p. 18) (own translation)

The state apparatus distances itself from the relations of production, but at the same time is present as a guarantor for them to occur. If necessary, state institutions are activated as endorsers of capitalist structures, protecting the private ownership of the means of production and the labor-capital relation.

Unlike historical forms that existed before capitalism, the state does not have a direct participation in the relations of production, but it is precisely this third-party characteristic that enables exploitation within the capitalist system, even giving a sense of “freedom” to those involved.

Both of these social forms go through the same process of derivation from the commodity-form and end up conforming themselves afterwards. Conformation is “a kind of second-degree derivation”, which creates a political-legal complex of mutual implication, serving as a guaranteeing pillar of capitalist sociability (Mascaro, 2013, p. 39).

Still, even though they derive from the commodity-form, it is important to emphasize that this process is relational and not logical or functional (*ibid*, p. 24). In other words, there is not an economic determinism, but rather the establishment of a system of social cohesion in

which social forms constantly support each other and ensure that they continue to exist. Without the legal form and the state political form, the commodity-form cannot even establish itself as such.

A good analogy of how social forms complement each other is the proposal by Romulo de Melo. For the author, it is as if the forms were musical instruments that constitute a “concert”:

as if the social forms of commodity, money, law, and the state each corresponded to a different musical instrument, all components of the same capitalist orchestra. And although distinct from each other by the specificity of each of their timbres, all these instruments would reproduce the same sound frequency of the musical notes given by the form of value and - to the extent that they are imposed in increasing rhythm - by the form of capital. For this very reason, these last two forms would correspond to the very musical score of the present symphony of exploitation and domination. (Melo, 2022, p. 37) (own translation).

As an orchestra, each of the social forms has a specificity that in combination results in the sonorous cohesion of a melody, the melody of capitalist sociability. They complement, sustain and connect each other in the structuring of this current society, generating a cohesive system. Proceeding in this metaphor proposed by Melo, it would be possible to affirm that the sound waves of the capitalist melody penetrate all social relations, a music that is heard all over the planet, regardless of each one’s choice.

Thus, it is not an option to decide to listen to them or not, they contaminate our social lives from the moment we are born in the capitalist society, they are behind our consciousness, formatting our social relations. For example, any person in the world who is not isolated from the social cycle needs to relate to other people through money in order to survive. This person needs to eat, needs to protect him or herself from the cold, among other indisputable material needs that in capitalist society inevitably take the form of commodity. Food has a form of commodity, a coat has a form of commodity, this computer, an instrument that is being used to write this thesis, has a form of commodity.

Living in this sociability means relating through this cohesive format, it means being a subject of law that relates with other subjects of law in relations of exchange and production; it means being a subject that is under a state political form that guarantees these social relations; it means being a subject that sells its labor force for money; it means being a subject that satisfies its needs using money to acquire commodities.

Survival depends on it, there is no escape. In a world where water, land, and everything around us is in the form of a commodity, even what proposes to go against



capitalism is in danger of being subsumed by its forms. For example, objects like a Che Guevara shirt, or Marx's "Capital", are inevitably commodities; they are exchanged by subjects of law through money; they are subordinated to these social forms that contaminate and format the totality of sociability.

Even objects that are not essentially commodities, because they do not have value, acquire the form of commodity when money is used to exchange them, as Marx states "Objects that in themselves are no commodities, such as conscience, honour, &c., are capable of being offered for sale by their holders, and of thus acquiring, through their price, the form of commodities. Hence an object may have a price without having value." (Marx, 1887, p. 70).

Therefore, the format imposed by the social forms contaminates all the contents of social life and determines our relations. However, through Holloway's contribution it is possible to understand that even this cohesive determination by the forms does not mean that there is no potential for "breaking" within totality.

### 1.3 JOHN HOLLOWAY AND THE FORMS

John Holloway places great emphasis on the theme of capitalist social forms in his two articles published in the collection "Open Marxism" in the 1990s (1992; 1995).

For Holloway, the category of social form is fundamental to Karl Marx's analysis in "Capital", and especially to Marx's critique of Smith and Ricardo's political economy. In this sense, to understand value and money, for example, as forms of social relations (value-form and money-form), is to get away from an understanding that they are timeless things and to see them as impermanent, temporary, historical forms, the result of social relations of a specific historical moment, the capitalist one (Holloway, 1995, p. 164-165).

It is an exercise of changing perspectives, going beyond the mere appearance and making an inversion that, as Holloway states, moves from the analysis of the photograph to the analysis of its negative film. It is a move from political economy to the critique of political economy. Thus, Holloway argues that the category of social form has a centrality in Marx's discussion and, inevitably, by presupposing movement, impermanence, and overcoming, it does not make sense when one assumes the conservation of capitalist relations of production, as bourgeois social science does (Holloway, 1995, p. 165).

For Holloway, another way of defining them would be as "modes of existence" of capitalist social relations (*ibid*).

There is also an internality of connections between these social forms, meaning that spheres, such as the state and money, which appear to be “separate”, are in reality social forms that compose the same social totality, that means that they are interconnected into a singular whole that emerges from the production of this society (*ibid*). As Holloway states “If all aspects of society are to be understood as forms of social relations, then clearly they all form part of an internally-related whole, they are all moments of a social totality.” (Holloway, 1995, p. 166).

In this sense, the category of social form brings with it some implications such as historicity, for being impermanent and typical of a historical moment; negativity, for bringing an aspect of criticism; and internality, since there are connections between forms occurring within the totality.

In relation to internality, it is possible to separate these social forms as abstractions of language theoretically, but in the end they all constitute the same singular totality, which results in a relation of “separation-in-unity or unity-in-separation” (*ibid*, p. 166). In Holloway’s view, this notion of being a separation-in-unity is central to questioning the dualism between subject and object, a dualism that characterizes much of the Marxist tradition in its critique of capitalist society:

What appears to be separate (the state, money, countries, and so on) can now be understood in terms of their separation-in-unity or unity-in-separation. It is now possible to see how the dualism of subject and object might be overcome theoretically, by reconceptualising the separation of subject and object as a separation-in-unity, by criticizing the dualism to reach an understanding of subject and object as forms of the same social totality. That which previously appeared to be hard and objective is now revealed as transitory, fluid. The bricks and mortar of capitalist reality crumble, theoretically (Holloway, 1995, p. 166)

It is important to mention that, for Holloway, the analysis of social forms can also lead to understandings that do not go beyond this criticized dualism, and therefore do not reach its critical potentiality (Holloway 1995, p. 167).

For example, the analysis can become an empty logic of categories by restricting itself to understanding that there is a logical connection between these forms, referring to social relations in a purely formal way. As a result, dualism reappears and there is a separation between a “pre-ordained” logic of capitalist social relations and the class struggle of subjects, seen as distinct from these relations (*ibid*).

In opposition to this type of analysis, Holloway seeks to reaffirm the unity of the social totality by proposing to overcome this separation between social relations and struggle,

which he does by understanding that the social relations that create the capitalist whole are inherently antagonistic, conflictive. They are relations of class struggle (*ibid*). Therefore, a fragmentation exists only in appearance:

The separation between social relations and struggle can only be overcome by seeing that the social relations of capitalism are inherently antagonistic, inherently conflictive, that all social relations within capitalism are relations of class struggle. To speak of the totality as a totality of social relations is to speak of it as a totality of antagonistic social relations (class struggle). To say that money is a form of social relations is to say that it is a form of class struggle, that its development cannot be understood as a logical process, but only as a process of struggle (a struggle which has a certain mode of existence, but is not predetermined). (Holloway, 1995, p. 167)

Then, in the author's view, forms of social relations are modes of existence of the class struggle. This leads to the conclusion that the capitalist format was not consolidated in a single moment when capitalist relations of production became dominant, on the contrary, it is in a constant exercise of establishment and re-establishment permeated by struggle. Social forms, therefore, should not be understood as static forms, but as antagonistic processes in motion (*ibid*, p. 175).

Thus, the value-form, the commodity-form, the money-form, the legal form and the state political form are not predetermined, but rather constantly reproduced by the very reproduction of capitalist social relations, which, in turn, are relations of struggle. Then, in the end, these social forms are forms of class struggle.

Consequently, Holloway argues that there is always an element of uncertainty, of openness, within these social forms (Holloway, 1992, p. 158). They are forms that carry their own antithesis within themselves:

The forms of social relations analyzed in *Capital* are forms which contain their own antithesis. Capitalism is a fetishised, alienated society, but the reason we can recognise it as such, and the reason we can conceive of a non-alienated, non-fetishised society, is because the antithesis of that society is contained within it. (Holloway, 1992, p. 158)

Therefore, the potential to overcome capitalist society and its social forms is not present in an "exterior" of the totality, but within this social whole itself. This leads to a consequence in which the critique of capitalist society does not assume a position of exteriority to the object, as occurs in dualism, but recognizes that the subjects are inside this very object reproducing it, at the same time that their subjectivities are affected by it.

This point is well exemplified in the metaphor Holloway uses in his text "The Train" (2020). In this reflection, the author treats capitalism as a train in motion. This train is an

object constituted by the totality of capitalist social relations, a “Gegenstand” (socially constituted object) and not an “Objekt” (objects that are outside and not socially constituted, such as the air, the mountain, and the trees) (Holloway, 2020, p. 172).

While some people are sitting more comfortably on this train, other people are sacrificed, as human life itself is the energy for the capitalist train to move. However, this process is not automatic, it is a constant struggle in which people inside the train, in their search for dignity, begin to question: how to get off, stop, or change the direction of the train? (*ibid*, p. 168).

Historical attempts of revolutions take place inside the train, and sometimes even manage to slow it down, giving the feeling that it will finally stop. However, the power of the train to move, from its principle of accumulation, is very strong. Also, breaking only one part of the train is not an option, because it is made up of several parts that drift apart, being impossible to destroy them separately. The train’s terrible strength is in its totality (Holloway, 2020, p. 168-169).

As a socially constituted object, the train depends on human action, not only for its creation, but also to keep moving. Ourselves, as subjects within this object, are what constitute and reconstitute the object with our antagonistic certain forms of social relations. As the labor theory of value from Marx states, capital depends on the continuous conversion of human activity into abstract labor (*ibid*, p. 174). Without this conversion that happens daily all over the world, capitalism would not exist.

The capitalist train, therefore, is not an object that is separate from the subjects, but it is the very antagonistic social practice that takes on forms of relations. Thus, besides the penetration of the object into our subjectivity, causing people to reproduce this system, there is also the presence of the subject in the object itself, the object does not exist without the social activity of the subjects (*ibid*, p. 173-174). As a result of this analysis, a precise dualism between subject and object disappears.

What then is the fragility of the capitalist train? For Holloway, it is precisely this point that it is an object that people reproduce. And despite having such an appearance, the reproduction is not spontaneous, which is demonstrated by the fact that there have been and still are several struggles against the train, against its logic of accumulation. Therefore, according to the author, it is possible to say that there is a missfitting between the socially constituted object and the “passengers” that constitute it (*ibid*, p. 170).

The movement of the train takes place in a context of struggle, resistance to the logic of capital, attempts of ruptures within the totality itself, people seeking to go in the opposite

direction of its typical forms of social relations. The antithesis of the train is within the train itself.

However, these struggles face great difficulty. By being permeated by the contradiction of still being parts of the totality, the negation of capitalism from within also ends up being negated by its very existence within capitalism. An example for this, mentioned before, is how objects that bring a critique of capitalism end up taking on the form of commodity. This process of duplicity and contradiction is worked out by Holloway in the following passage:

Our existence-against-capital is the inevitable constant negation of our existence-in-capital. Conversely, our existence-in-capital (or, more clearly, our containment within capital) is the constant negation of our revolt against capital. Our containment within capital is a constant process of fetishising, or forming, our social relations, a constant struggle. (Holloway, 1995, p. 176).

The revolt against capitalism is then threatened by this incessant force. Our activities are constantly being pushed into the logic of the social form of labor, transforming them into abstract labor that produces a social substance: value. Likewise, our own social relations are constantly being pushed into the commodity form and money form (Holloway, 2016, p. 45). The result of this is that “We rebel, We want to do something different, and all the time there’s this horrible sucking noise that pulls us back into the logic of the system.” (*ibid*, p. 57).

The question then for Holloway becomes not only the struggle against exploitation, of course this has a centrality, but also how to break this cohesive system that all people end up being part of and that is established through forms of social relations that coercively shape sociability (*ibid*, p. 41).

And this is where his change of perspective toward the subject is of extreme importance. Understanding that the subject itself reproduces this system with forms of social relations can be a trap towards hopelessness, since we are daily reproducing a system that dominates us. However, Holloway makes an inversion, and states that it is specifically this aspect that gives an opening to understand that capitalist sociability has a cohesion, but that it is not perfect.

For him, this cohesion should not be seen as a static noun, but rather as a verb in motion, a “cohering” that constantly ties us together but at the same time faces resistance when we try to go in the opposite direction and fight against this movement. Thus, it is not a definitive process, the social cohering has gaps, openings, possibilities (*ibid*, p. 59-60).

The very possibility of questioning from within the totality, as being done here, already demonstrates an imperfection. So, there is determination by the forms, but there is no determinism. In this sense, for Holloway, the overcoming of capitalist totality must be sought from this totality itself. It is a struggle against, at the same time that we are conditioned, as an in-against-and-beyond movement of the subject:

the social cohesion in which we live, this society, this tight weave within which we live, is obviously not total. At times we think it is, at times we think it's all domination, it's all money, that there's nothing that can be done. But the very fact that we perceive that domination, that we criticize it, means that that is not true [...] behind and beside that social cohesion is a constant movement against that cohesion. Behind money there is a constant movement against money; behind value there is a constant movement against value and for the creation of other values. (Holloway, 2016, p. 59).

And who is the subject that fights against the cohering movement of the capitalist entanglement? Following the line of open Marxism, for Holloway this subject must be open, undefined, it is a subject called by the author as a simple “We” that must be built in the practice itself against this process of cohesion. A subject that builds itself from its own doing and not within an identity or institutionality that restricts it. This construction by the author goes in the direction of avoiding old formulas and definitions about revolution and a revolutionary subject. Holloway’s proposal is to bring more questions than effectively offer definitive answers (Holloway, 2016, p. 18-20).

In any case, rebellion against this cohesion movement exists. As the author states, we only have to look at the anti-capitalist movements of recent decades to recognize this. These movements are developing new concepts from their own practical experiences of struggle, they are trying to create other forms of sociability, often as undefined subjects (*ibid*, p. 41). This is the case of the Zapatista movement, which has great influence on Holloway’s thought and seeks not to identify themselves with static definitions. It is a movement in constant movement, in struggle, adapting, facing the logic of totality for dignity and autonomy against the forms of capitalist social relations. In this sense, it is the movement’s own practice that offers answers to the questions that arise, which is recognized in the Zapatista principle of “*preguntando, caminamos*” (asking, we walk) (*ibid*, p. 12-13).

Therefore, for Holloway, one must seek to recognize the diverse movements of rebellion against the capitalist cohesive force, aiming to create, expand, multiply, and connect these “cracks” that exist in totality, as an interstitial process of multiple ruptures (*ibid*, p. 54).

But what is a “crack”? This notion has a great importance for his thought, it is present in several of the author’s works and more specifically in the book “Crack Capitalism” (2010).

#### 1.4 IN-AGAINST-AND-BEYOND, THE CRACKS

As seen, the forms of capitalist social relations carry their own antithesis, since they are forms generated by antagonistic relations of struggle and not automatic processes, despite their appearance. For being a constant struggle in motion, capitalist cohesion is produced and reproduced out of social relations themselves, but this is not absolute, the process faces flaws, openings, resistance and emancipatory potentialities within the social whole. Cracks, therefore, are inevitably present in the totality as in-against-and-beyond movements.

Before delving further into the concept of crack, it is important to point out that it is also aligned with the openness proposed by Holloway. Thus, it should be treated as an open question-concept, that is, a concept in constant movement that should not be seen in a dogmatic way, but from this very dynamics of the struggle against capitalist social forms (Holloway, 2010, p. 13).

Therefore, Holloway does not intend to give a definitive answer of what a “crack” is, make a rigid classification, or offer a recipe for how capitalism can be overcome from them. His main goal is to recognize that they exist and that they have potential.

Also, the author’s idea is not to offer a paradigm for understanding the current stage of capitalism, but to emphasize the movement, struggle, and instability of this seemingly infallible system, and, from this contribution, make a provocation, a challenge (*ibid*, p. 11-13).

Still, even with this warning, Holloway’s approach provides a possibility of understanding better what a crack is in general, some of its possible dimensions, examples, implications, and challenges.

For the author, the cracks start from denial, “We want to break the world as it is”, it is the denial that starts from a “scream” against this system that produces wars; in which millions of people starve while billionaires accumulate more and more; in which other forms of life and the planet itself is being destroyed; in which our own existence is threatened. But it is not a simple negation, it is accompanied by a positive moment, an attempt to create other forms of social relations opposed to the format of the typical relations of capitalist sociability (*ibid*, p. 3). In this sense, negation and creation are imbricated in the definition of crack:

Are we to say, then, that any construction of other forms of organization outside the mainstream of capitalist social relations should be seen as a crack in capitalist

domination? Not if we think of a crack as a space or moment of negation-and-creation, of refusal and other doing [...] the relations of mutual support that are created in such situations can easily become the material basis for a sort of flip-over, a real detournement in which victims suddenly emerge as rebels, and the structures of suffering are suddenly transformed into anticipations of a better world. (Holloway, 2010, p. 24)

Cracks, as creative centers of transgression, struggles, rebellions of particulars (Holloway, 2010, p. 35), move from the particular and challenge the cohesion of the very totality of which they are part.

The method of recognizing and creating these cracks is a practical-theoretical activity, since both these spheres complement each other. The practice itself as a movement of breaking cohesion is complemented by an exercise of recognizing other cracks in the totality (Holloway, 2010, p. 8). It is a dialectical method, in the sense of a negative dialectic, an inversion of understanding. It seeks to understand the totality not from its solidity, but from those cracks that are present, from the perspective of crisis, of its weaknesses and contradictions (*ibid*, p. 9).

If we imagine the capitalist totality as a wall, it is possible to make an analogy that the cracks are like disruptions, fissures, spread all over its surface. They are in the wall itself, can increase or decrease over time, and can also threaten the integrity of the entire wall if they are enlarged, strengthened and connected (*ibid*, p. 8).

These refusal-and-other-creation struggles of subjects, ordinary people, rebels, revolutionaries (*ibid*, p. 5-6) are always in motion, dynamic, and are often an experience of “learning-in-struggle” (*ibid*, p. 22). The cracks are also unpredictable, they can either continue to exist or be “frozen” and cease to exist through lack of action, or reabsorption into the logic of capitalist forms (*ibid*).

Holloway argues that although this concept of crack seems abstract, it is grounded in the concrete practice of various anti-capitalist struggles that are taking place in the last decades. In this sense, his proposal to overcome capitalism through cracks is not his own invention, but is part of the flow of these various current resistances. In a period when radical changes seem so distant from reality, the author wants to explore these experiments that are happening now and may happen in the future (*ibid*, p.11).

According to the author, there is always an incompleteness regarding cracks since they are creative and dynamic experiments:

Although a crack should not be seen as a means to an end, there is always an insufficiency about it, an incompleteness, a restlessness. A crack is not a step on the



path to Revolution, but it is an opening outwards. It is a lighthouse of dignity shining into a dark night, a radio transmitter broadcasting rebellion to who knows whom. It is never entirely closed, even when it is violently suppressed. [There is a drive outwards from these cracks. They are centers of transgression, radiating waves of rebellion, not according to some pre-determined model (for these do not work) but always experimentally, creatively. Our cracks are not self-contained spaces but rebellions that recognise one another, feel affinities, reach out for each other. (Holloway, 2010, p. 35)

Even with this inevitable incompleteness and insufficiency, the author presents us some dimensions that may be relevant for a better understanding of what cracks actually are in reality. It is important to note, however, that cracks break the very notion of dimensionality and are not restricted to Holloway's dimensional examples (Holloway, 2010, p. 27).

For the author, the most obvious way to think of a crack is in a spatial way, in a territory. In this sense, one of the biggest current cracks are the Zapatista autonomous territories in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Space was and is fundamental for the movement's struggle against forms of capitalist social relations, against the state, against the commodity, against alienated labor (*ibid*, p. 28). However, one should not romanticize the Zapatista experience, it is a constant and dynamic construction that faces several contradictions.

For example, by being within the totality, communities still need to use money, sell products, and buy what they cannot produce. In any case, the Zapatista struggle for other forms of sociability, other "worlds", continues to exist in a dynamic and adaptive way for almost 30 years (Lacerda; Pelbart, 2021, p. 55-56).

A similar idea to the concept of crack is present in the collective notion of their struggle itself. As noted in the book written by Subcomandante Galeano (formerly Marcos), an "ordinary" spokesman for the collective movement, the Zapatistas seek to open, and keep open, a "*fenda*" (gap) in the wall of the prevailing system. This "*fenda*" seems harmless, useless, incapable of destroying the wall, but the important thing is that it makes it possible to look to the other side, to see the possibility of building other possible worlds, to understand that tomorrow is still to come (Galeano, 2021, p. 28-40).

Although the movement understands that the context of its experience is directly linked to the particularity of its territory, the Zapatistas also understand that the struggle against capitalism is universal. As they state, the capitalist system is a Hydra, a monster that one head is cut off and two are born in its place, but still, the only thing that remains for the movement is the incessant struggle for dignified life against the Hydra (*ibid*, p. 46).

Even if space is the most obvious and direct dimension of cracks in totality - as a place where one seeks to "walk" in the opposite direction of the coercive logic of capitalist social

forms and build other forms of sociability - another possible dimension is the one related to activities.

This dimension addressed by Holloway can be characterized from the concrete struggles for de-commodification of activities and transferring activities to a popular control that seeks not to follow capitalist logic. In this sense, struggles against privatization, against capital control in areas like “water, natural resources, education, health care, communication, software and music” (Holloway, 2010, p. 28), are some examples of these cracks that are expressed by different popular revolts. In this dimension of crack, often the negative part, of saying “no” to capital, to the logic of money, is more evident, while the other-doing is implicit (*ibid*).

Moreover, meanwhile capitalism is characterized by an enclosure movement that converts all common spheres into private property, this dimension of the activities of struggle against capitalist logic is constantly associated with the creation of “commons”:

The commons can be seen as the embryonic form of a new society: ‘If the cellular form of capitalism is the commodity, the cellular form of a society beyond capital is the common’ (Dyer-Witheford, 2007, p. 28). These common areas, at least to the extent that there is genuine social control and not just state ownership, can be seen as so many cracks in the domination of capital, so many no-go areas where the writ of capital does not run, gashes in the weave of domination. Or rather: if capital is a movement of enclosing, the commons are a disjointed common-ing, a moving in the opposite direction, a refusing of enclosure, at least in particular areas. (Holloway, 2010, p. 29-30).

Another dimension mentioned by the author is that of time. Cracks can also be temporal moments. For Holloway, some examples of this dimension are: protests against capitalism, which despite their appearance of not providing a great and immediate structural change, they are still moments that demonstrate the flaws of the current cohesion. They are like flashes of light that illuminate another kind of society from the indignation of the current sociability (Holloway, 2010, p. 30).

Moments of collective solidarity can also be seen as cracks. This is what commonly happens when a natural disaster strikes and groups of people independent of state forces help each other, campaign, and offer a type of support that does not fit into the capitalist logic of accumulation (*ibid*, p. 31).

Holloway offers these examples that make the visualization of cracks easier, however, we must remember its necessary and characteristic indefiniteness, the author’s intention was not to propose a classification typology (*ibid*, p. 36). In any case, it is possible to briefly state that cracks can be expressed by:

Spaces or moments or types of activity in which we say no, here we will not accept the logic of money, we will not accept the logic of profit, we will not accept the dynamic of death. Here, in this little space, in this little moment, in this particular activity - in relation to water, say, or education - we will not accept commodification. And these can be seen as cracks in the texture of domination, as autonomous spaces if you like, or they can be seen as dignities. Or they can be seen as communizings-spaces or moments in which we create the basis of what could possibly be another society. (Holloway, 2016, p. 65)

The existence of the cracks, however, is under constant threat. These multiple and particular human creations of spaces, moments or activities in which people seek an “other-doing”, face the force of the capitalist cohering system that “pulls” them to be reabsorbed into the logic of the totality. This force presents itself in reality in different ways, for Holloway, the most obvious are through the state, ourselves, and value.

Following the line of derivationism, the author argues that the state is not a simple organization, but a form of social relation that is particular to capitalist society, developed over the centuries as fundamental to the maintenance of this mode of production (Holloway, 2010 p. 58). Therefore, it ends up being an essential institution to confront the cracks and guarantee cohesion, especially from violent repression under the arguments of “law and order”. A practical example is the case of occupations, always subject to truculent police action, in which life is placed as inferior when compared to an abandoned place (*ibid*, p. 54-55).

Besides direct violent repression, the state also acts through other spheres, such as a certain kind of public education, the law, and its forms of action, imposing on us a certain way of acting, within certain limits that restrict the cracks’ struggle against the cohering (*ibid*, p. 57).

This force of cohesion from the state political form is confronted by the struggle of these movements through different tools and ideas. The Zapatista movement, for example, besides always being ready to defend their territories against state repression, seeks autonomy from the state through denying any kind of subsidy and building their own autonomous schools and health systems. In the opposite direction, some *Piquetero* groups in Argentina, understand that receiving state money does not invalidate the movement’s struggle against capitalist forms of social relations, but it is a way to recover some of the social wealth generated. In this sense, the central problem for these groups is not where the money comes from, but how to find ways to have social control over money beyond the state, through forms of direct democracy (Holloway, 2010, p. 57).

For Holloway, there are no “right” and “wrong” ways of how cracks should be, it depends on the context of the struggle and is not a matter of dogmatic purity, the most important thing is to understand that there is a direction of the struggle in opposition to the cohesion of the system, as an in-against-and-beyond movement (Holloway, 2010, p. 57-58).

Another way that cohesion ends up threatening the existence of the cracks is from ourselves. In this sense, Holloway says that we create the cracks and they are threatened by the totality in which we live, but, furthermore, this totality is not only external to us, we carry it within ourselves. Even in spaces, moments and activities that propose to go against the logic of capitalism, typical habits of our sociability reappear. For example, horizontal assemblies are threatened by vertical patterns of power that are part of our social lives within capitalism (*ibid*, p. 63-64).

Thus, the human contradictions of a still capitalist sociability must be taken into account. Again citing the Zapatista movement, Holloway recalls the “*Juntas de Buen Gobierno*” and the functionality of these political instances for the movement. These *juntas* have a system of quickly rotating the people responsible for political functions, not only to involve more people in self-government, but also to avoid episodes of corruption and verticality. Another example is the Cecosesola cooperative in Venezuela, which, in addition to production and distribution, uses much of its time to discuss issues such as sexism, racism, and authoritarianism among people (*ibid*, p. 65).

Therefore, it should not be sought a moral purity of people who fight against capitalism’s logic. The purpose of the cracks is not to create a community of “saints”, but to establish new forms of social relations. In any case, these problems are real and threaten the potential of the cracks, but they should also not be seen from the lens that there is an inevitable “human nature” (*ibid*, p. 64-65).

Besides the state, and ourselves, the other way exemplified by Holloway that threatens the cracks is value. For the author, although the state acts in defense of social cohesion, it is defending something else, a force behind it that is stronger: the movement of money. And as seen, money is the form of manifestation of value in capitalist society (*ibid*, p. 65).

Holloway considers value to be the force that holds social cohesion together through money, it is a social form that embraces the rationality of capitalism against the irrational rebelliousness. Revisiting the metaphora of Melo, value is as the “musical notes” for the capitalist orchestra.

A practical example of that challenge is how even factories that have been occupied by workers suffer an inevitable pressure to sell their products on the market as commodities

(Holloway, 2010, p. 67). The Zapatistas, as mentioned, also need to engage in exchange relations with the use of money.

Again, Holloway emphasizes the point that there is no purity, the challenge then is to understand to what extent it is possible to use money without being used by it, without allowing activities and relations to be determined by it (Holloway, 2010, p. 69).

From these enormous difficulties, the cracks are at the limit of impossibility, they are always close to disillusion and frustrations. Thinking from the logic of capitalist cohesion, they should not exist, it is not part of its rationality. But nevertheless, they still exist with all their contradictions, fighting on the edge, seeking the impossible, walking in the opposite direction of the system's logic. They are constant struggles within cohesion itself, they are flaws, fissures, movements of in-against-and-beyond capitalism (*ibid*, p. 71-72).

The potentiality of these cracks to really overcome capitalism is unknown, it is a question more than an answer, but Holloway's proposal is to find these cracks, connect them, strengthen them and expand them to break the wall of totality through the particulars. It is to understand that the frustration of being subordinated to these forms of social relations exists in everyday life, it is expressed in moments, activities, spaces. It is an antagonism that presents itself in a multiplicity of interconnected fault lines that form a dynamic network of cracks, with existing and potential cracks that can be opened (*ibid*, p. 73).

It is possible to conclude then, from Holloway's contribution, that the cracks seek to break the logic of capitalist cohesion, which holds us and coerces us to act socially in a certain way, according to certain forms.

And besides being negative, cracks are also positive propositions of an other-doing, an other-living, a different way of relating. However, by existing within the totality, these movements of struggle are in conflict with the world around them, there is a constant antagonism, a constant pressure for the cracks to be absorbed into this capitalist cohesion. But even at the limits of impossibility, of the irrational, of the illogical, they exist. They are everywhere, questioning the capitalist "cohering", with different sizes and impacts to the system, trying to walk in the opposite direction and build a new society.

## 2 MODERN SPORTS AND JEAN-MARIE BROHM'S CRITICISM OF FOOTBALL

### 2.1 SITUATING THE CHAPTER

While the first chapter was used for an analysis of the social forms of capitalism, together with John Holloway's critical theoretical production on the totality and the possibility of breaking this cohesive system, the present chapter will try to bring a moment of more concreteness to this thesis' path.

In that sense, the centrality of this chapter is to recover some points of Jean-Marie Brohm's critique of football as the "opium of the people" in the capitalist world of institutional sports. This resumption will be based on a literature review of three of his works: "Sociología Política del deporte" (Brohm, 1982), "Sport - A prison of measured time: essays by Jean-Marie Brohm" (Brohm, 1989), and "El fútbol, una peste emocional" (Brohm; Perelman, 2018).

Jean-Marie Brohm is a French sociologist of sport who builds his critique from a Marxist perspective, he is influenced mainly by the ideas of the philosopher Louis Althusser regarding ideological apparatuses. It is possible to say that Brohm is part of a "traditional" line in the "left" criticism of football (Kennedy; Kennedy, 2016, p. 3).

However, before this chapter delves into Brohm's work specifically, it is necessary to understand the context and connection between capitalism and football as a modern sport.

Therefore, the first part of this chapter will provide a historical materialist analysis of the establishment of modern sports, including football, to understand how this process relates fundamentally to the social changes that were taking place in British capitalist industrial society, and inevitably to the forms of social relations typical of this totality. In addition, an emphasis will be placed on football as a modern institutionalized mass sport, through a historical retracing from its emergence until the contemporary football world. It is a search to address the dynamism of football's history as something in constant connection with the very dynamics of capitalist society.

After this initial moment, in the second part of the chapter will effectively come the resumption of Jean-Marie Brohm's criticism. However, before we get to Brohm's critique of football in particular, it is important to see what the author's critique of modern sports is in general. Therefore, Brohm's reflection on the sport institution - as an Ideological State

Apparatus that assumes several functions in the ideological consolidation of capitalist relations of production - will be brought forth.

And finally, this chapter will move on to its climax, emphasizing Brohm's argument about football's political-ideological function as the "opium of the people". Thus, the focus intended is his criticism regarding the mobilization around the commodified world of football, and not necessarily the game itself, although both spheres are inherently connected.

## 2.2 THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF MODERN SPORTS

Human history is marked by the existence of games: "The impulse to play is as vital to human culture as the desire to sing, the urge to draw or the need to tell stories. As a form of physical exhilaration, group solidarity or downright sheer pleasure, games are common to almost all societies in almost all periods of history." (Collins, 2013, p. 1). Play is a relational human activity that is established from the connection between human beings and nature (*ibid*) and, of course, was already present before capitalist sociability.

However, the notion of "sport" as we know it today, is only consolidated with the advent of the capitalist mode of production, in that sense, activities that existed in societies before capitalism were sometimes non-competitive, based on religious ceremonies, with different methods and meanings. In general, the existence of "expert" players and the idea of "winning" did not exist in the way we understand it today, such factors are fully consolidated only with the rise of modern sports (*ibid*).

Moreover, unlike the sporting phenomenon, these previous activities were not generally codified, and were not organized through commercial interests. Also, although financial bets already existed, they were incidental factors that by themselves did not have the structural capacity to establish the games as a "separate" part of everyday life (*ibid*, p. 2).

It is only from the beginning of the 18th century that there is a process of change in these activities under the influence of the rise of the capitalist industrial society in Britain.

British society was undergoing a great social transformation, feudal vestiges were coming to an end and industrial life in the city was being consolidated, especially in London, where an entertainment industry was born through an expansion of theater, music and arts. In that sense, leisure began to be systematically commercialized (*ibid*, p. 5).

At that time, the most prominent games in British society were horse racing, boxing, and cricket, and even though those activities had their roots in traditional games of rural life, they became very different from their predecessors (Collins, 2013, p. 2).

According to Brohm, this does not mean to say that elements of the old playful and competitive activities did not continue to exist in modern sports, only that there was a dialectical movement that accompanied the capitalist development itself (Brohm, 1982, p 30-32). A kind of rupture-conservation, in which modern sport appears as an abrupt discontinuity of previous activities, but without ceasing to be a historical continuity of what already existed.

So, together with the patronage of aristocrats who saw the possibility of making profit from this entertainment sector, those activities were going through a process of being contaminated by the social forms of capitalism, in which people paid to watch, were paid to play, and bet large sums on their results (Collins, 2013, p. 2).

As seen, the dominant social forms act behind our consciences and give a format to the totality of our social relations. In this case, playful activities had become subsumed by the commodity-form and other typical forms of capitalism, beginning to be established as a system of institutionalized modern sports.

According to Jean-Marie Brohm, this system emerged historically through some characteristics of capitalist industrialization: the development of free time and leisure; the universalization of commerce through mass transportation and means of communication; the industrial and urban technical-scientific revolution; the consolidation of bourgeois-democratic ideas and the confrontations between nation-states (Brohm, 1982, p. 43-46).

These elements, aligned with the importance acquired by clocks and timekeeping in the establishment of industrial society (*ibid*, p. 41), provide the foundation for the three essential features of modern industrial sports: “the pursuit of the record, the growing interest in speed, and the obsession with the measurable” (*ibid*, p. 40).

Another important factor was how such a sports system was only consolidated through codifications and general rules, which aimed to enable the comparison between individuals, marks and scores, allowing the designation of the best competitor or the best performance at the end of the event (*ibid*, p. 11).

By codifying competitive activities under certain objective and impersonal parameters that ensured a formal equality among those involved, the goal was to unify them through a set of universal and general rules. As a result, in 1743, general rules accepted in Boxing were fixed, and in 1744 the same happened to Cricket (Collins, 2013, p. 7). These process of codification, more than occasional events, were a necessity imposed by commodification, since they gave investors, competitors and bettors greater “security” for making the outcome less random and more “fair”:



The introduction of codes of rules that were accepted by all players and for all major contests were a direct consequence of the commercial development of sport. This itself was an extension of the way in which the law in the eighteenth century was itself acquiring a new significance. Britain was a society that was moving away from religious and monarchical authority and asserting the centrality of an impersonal and 'objective' rule of law based on property rights. Transparency and formal equality before the law were essential for the smooth transaction of business, just as they were for the regulation of gambling and the playing of games (Collins, 2013, p. 6-7).

Therefore, the legal form and state political form, seen in the first chapter, are mirrored in the institutionalization of modern sports. Competitors, investors and gamblers begin to engage economically in competitive activities, in modern sports, as “subjects of rights” with an abstract formalized equality, bound to objective and impersonal rules that wanted to enable a “fair” competition within the games and the business around it.

The same way that the subject of right engage in relations of exchange and production of commodities with their particular interests in opposite sides of contracts, sports competitors are represented in the sporting world as “sports subjects”:

In such a society appears, Marx adds, the cult of the abstract man, of the subject of law and, we add, of the sports subject, in which the essential consists in comparing in the sports market - sports scene - its marks, which incorporate a certain ‘quantum’ of mark strength to other marks of other sportsmen who are considered, legally and regulatory, to have the same rights and duties in the experimental conditions of the sports competition. The sports subject, which is the supreme expression of the domination of abstract time, is a derivative of the mercantile and juridical subject. (Brohm, 1982, p. 50) (own translation)

In addition to this connection with the capitalist legal form, the figure that the state apparatus assumes in capitalist sociability is represented in the modern sports world by the referee. As well as the state, the referee does not actively participate in the relations assumed in a sports competition, but is always there as a third guarantor, ready to apply sanctions if the relationship between the competitors goes against the “legal” parameters:

In law, a set of techniques and rules ensures legal certainty and security, rationalizing the use of violence by the State. In the case of sports, the figure of the referee is equivalent to that of the magistrate, the impartial third party who has the power to decide on conflicts (a figure unthinkable in recreational sports, but indispensable in sports-business) (Caldas, 2014, p. 4) (own translation).

Thus, capitalist typical forms of social relations penetrated those activities and gave it a format that was in accordance with its mercantile logic, changing them fundamentally and

consolidating what would be the universal parameters in the new world of institutionalized modern sports.

### 2.3 THE COMMODIFIED WORLD OF FOOTBALL

During that period of the early eighteenth century, the commercial impact of sports was still very small, its importance was derisory compared to what it would be in the following centuries. Those sports activities were still generally recreational, ways to pass the time, and the process of commercialization was in an embryonic stage (Collins, 2013, p. 49).

Even the term “sport” was still used to refer to practices such as hunting, shooting, and fishing; it was only as of the 1900s that the use of the term began to encompass other competitive physical activities (*ibid*). In any case, the structural bases and the capitalist format that would be replicated in the sports world for the next three centuries were already being established.

The moment was so early that even football, the sport that would become the world’s most popular, had no relevant role in the period. At the time, embryonic forms of the game were practiced in different ways, in different localities, and there were usually no general rules that would allow regular matches between regions, cities, and villages (*ibid*, p. 12-13).

Also, such practices were generally not patronized by aristocrats because they were viewed with suspicion by the upper classes of British society, which identified them as working-class activities with a reputation for violence (*ibid*).

For Collins, the use of the name “football” to denote those different 18th century activities should not lead to an understanding that this word is a synonym for the sport we know, and although groups claim the prehistory of football as their own, the similarities of those earlier activities to the sport that was later established are very few (*ibid*).

It was only in the last three decades of the 19th century that football, as the sport we know, began to assume an active presence in the sporting world. In that period, a sporting revolution was taking place as the phenomenon of mass spectacle-sports started to take shape. However, it is important to mention that in the opposite of understanding this moment as the beginning of the “commodification” of sport, Collins argues, based on what has been brought here, that sport was already commodified since the 18th century, when there was the capitalist transformation of boxing, horse racing, and cricket. Therefore, what occurs in that period from the mid-nineteenth century onwards is the development of a self-sustaining structure

through a permanent market, which did not exist previously (*ibid*, p. 50). Moreover, some characteristics and events of the period were essential to this new sporting historical moment:

This new model of commercial mass spectator sport could only establish itself because of the social and economic environment of the late Victorian age. In particular, three key elements had to be present for this sporting revolution to take place: an industrial working class, a unified national culture and a mass popular press. The absence of any of these would have severely restricted the growth of modern sport. (Collins, 2013, p. 53)

The first element mainly drove team sports such as football, rugby, cricket, and baseball, which came to be numerically “dominated” by the working classes who identified with the collective aspect of these sports, since their daily work lives were very much based on the collective action of groups and labor unions (Collins, 2013, p. 53-54).

The development of a newspaper press meant an industrial revolution for the world of modern sports, it extended the reach of games beyond the spaces in which they were played, creating a community of followers of sporting events, tournaments, and their markets. In addition to advertising, the newspaper industry also participated actively in the organization and development of competitions (*ibid*, p. 59).

In that moment, football began to take on a leading role in relation to other sports in Britain. This is because it managed to create a sustainable business system with clubs and regional companies linking up, and making football able to exploit this new sporting moment of mass entertainment (*ibid*, p. 52). Allied to this, while rugby — the most popular variation of football until 1880 — resisted the advance of professionalism in sports more emphatically, football legalized the practice under certain restrictions in 1885. As a result, football moved in the direction of assuming a position of greater popularity in relation to rival sports (*ibid*, p. 80).

The entry of professionalism into football (1885) meant a greater acceptance in the establishment of formal competitive leagues, moving away from the unwritten and recreational regulations typical of amateurism, and moving towards a written, formal, and objective regulatory system (*ibid*, p. 83).

In accordance with the format of capitalist legal and political social forms, there was a formal separation of the game from the middle class individuals who controlled it in Britain: “There was now an external, objective set of rules for the governance of the game. Although the game was still led by the same people, the basis for their control of the game was no

longer absolute - it was ultimately controlled by a set of independent laws” (Collins, 2013, p. 83).

Now more “impersonal”, football was able to move beyond the borders of Britain. As a result of the commercial connections established by its imperialism in recent centuries, it was “carried” by middle-class men, mainly tradesmen, businessmen, and engineers, eventually establishing itself in other countries. In that moment, sports assumed a binding function between British commerce and the non-English speaking world (*ibid*).

The international character of football was confirmed in 1904 with the founding of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). From then on, football became aggressively globalized and saw its popularity further enhanced with the advent of radio, post World War I (*ibid*, p. 84).

Radio meant a second industrial revolution in the world of sports, it transformed football into an even more commercially strong mass cultural sector. Like the newspaper, this medium became part of the sports world and it offered something that newspapers could not: immediacy. This characteristic made it possible for fans to follow matches simultaneously from another location (*ibid*, p. 86), pushing the boundaries of the football world further.

Just as the newspaper revolutionized the world of sports in the 18th and 19th centuries, and radio revolutionized it between the World Wars, a new moment in the sports industry began in the 1950s. The third sports industrial revolution is marked by the emergence of television, which had a profound impact on the reach, sponsorship investments, and the influence of sports on people's daily lives:

This televised revolution in sport changed sport in two fundamental ways. First, the regular appearance of sport on television, whether in games, news or documentary programmes, meant that clubs and leagues became a medium for advertising in their own right. Rather than being restricted to their own local markets and those who attended their matches, clubs now had a regional and even a national platform to offer businesses for advertising and sponsorship. Leagues and tournaments could offer businesses opportunities to advertise on television at much cheaper rates than buying advertising directly from the networks. [Second, the unprecedented torrent of money liberated clubs and leagues from their previous reliance on spectators as the sole source of income. While crowd revenue remained the biggest source of revenue for most sports - and could not be ignored because television shrank empty seats on the screen - the television audience became a decisive factor in the sports business. (Collins, 2013, p. 116-117).

The advent of television broadcasting meant increased competition between different sectors of the entertainment industry, generating a major cultural change in sports. In football,

the moment was marked by a new generation of managers who were linked to the corporate world of business.

During the Cold War, there was also an “Americanization” of global culture in the countries most influenced by the United States. Such a phenomenon affected the world of football in several ways: players were seen now as “Hollywood” celebrities; there was now a middle-class consumer type of fan beyond the existing working class fan; the competitiveness of the clubs were also changed, there was an increasing inequality which started to form a winning elite of clubs; and even the game itself was transformed, becoming more pragmatic and mechanical (Santos; Helal, 2016, p. 60).

In addition, three other historical moments in the second half of the 20th century represented “peaks” in the relation between the mercantile logic of capitalism and institutionalized football:

In 1974, João Havelange became president of FIFA and inaugurated a moment of sophistication of football as a business. By taking advantage of the development of television broadcasting, Havelange articulated with large multinational companies interested in using football as a medium to advertise their brands. As a result, the target audience of football clubs were impacted, since if before they used to be restricted to their cities, now the focus expanded to television viewers as well;

In 1989, in England, overcrowding at the Sheffield stadium resulted in 96 deaths and hundreds of injuries among Liverpool fans. This unfortunate case, known as the “Hillsborough tragedy”, favored the neoliberal discourse of the Thatcher government, which had already carried out a systematic persecution of the fans of Liverpool, the most popular club in the country. Ignoring the real causes of the accident and the omission of the police forces, the government promoted a series of demands for renovations in English stadiums, which led to a drastic change in the audience of these spaces through an increase in ticket prices. This price increase would be replicated in other places around the world and would mark a new era of commodification in the 1990s (*ibid*, p. 60-61);

Another relevant historical moment was the adoption of the concept of multipurpose arenas propagated by FIFA and UEFA, which began in the last decade of the 20th century and progressed into the 21st century. These institutions started to demand from the host countries of their competitions the construction of stadiums, now “arenas”, based on a certain model of very high maintenance costs. In these new venues, besides the clubs’ football matches, the focus would also be to hold other entertainment industry events. Such structural changes meant a reformatting of the football stadium audiences, since the consumption capacity and

behavior pattern of the new audience should be compatible with the expectations of profit. As a consequence, a significant change occurred in the fan-club relationship, becoming more characterized as a consumer-product relationship (Santos; Helal, 2016, p. 60-61).

The 21st century is marked by the existence of a football market that moves billions around the planet, aided by the development of the internet, its popularity is more global than ever. The link between sport and capitalism that was established in the eighteenth century has never been so strong and apparent (Collins, 2013, p. 125). However, it is important to stress that even though this commercial expansion of sports, and of football in particular, seems to be a recent phenomenon, it is only the manifestation of something that has been going on for 250 years.

Football has emerged within capitalist sociability, and the current so-called “football-business”, “recovers” several trends that already existed at the beginning of the consolidation of modern sports. For example, just as in the early days when British aristocrats owned Cricket clubs, racehorses, and financed boxers, super-rich individuals and companies are increasingly monopolizing football through the purchase of clubs (*ibid*, p. 122).

In the same way, the current rise of sports betting, which is provided by the consolidation of the Internet and television, is a resumption of the sophisticated betting markets that already existed in the 1700s, especially in Cricket and boxing. The old returns as the new, adapted to the structural changes that occur in the dynamics of capitalist sociability.

Football, as a modern and institutionalized sport, is a product of capitalism that emerged historically after the subsumption of game-activities by the capitalist forms of social relations, which gave a format for this modern sports world in which football was consolidated.

Therefore, the institutionalization of football happened within the mercantile logic of commodity, value, and money, and under an organization similar to the legal and political form of capitalist society. As a result, there is no way of thinking of an institutionalized football outside the capitalist system; its very establishment took place within the cohesion imposed by the typical forms of this sociability.

Thus, it is important to state that it is an already “commodified world of football”, since football is inevitably subordinated to capitalist social forms since its beginning. However, this does not mean to say that the relationship between football and capitalism is static. As can be argued from the events cited, the commodified world of football is also in a constant process of commodification, following the dynamics of capitalist society and its

historical movement. It is a context that adapts itself to mercantile logic, with a large influence by the media. Just as capitalist sociability is in movement, the relation with the football world is continuous and dynamic.

There is an incessant “cohering force” that seeks to “pull” football more and more to the logic imposed by the commodity and other forms of social relations within capitalist totality. This does not mean to say that there is an “essence” of football outside the totality, but that the relationship between football and the social forms is in constant movement, and, as seen in the first chapter, it also faces resistance and struggles from people that want to reject the capitalist logic, but that aspect will be worked only later on in this thesis.

## 2.4 JEAN-MARIE BROHM’S CRITICAL CONTRIBUTION

Now, as the second part of this chapter, the goal is to approach Jean-Marie Brohm’s critical contribution to reflect about the functionality of football in capitalist society, as well as his criticism regarding the institution of modern sports in general.

According to Brohm, modern sports together form a universal system which is inseparable from the structures and functioning of the society in which it was born, it is a typical historical phenomenon of industrial capitalism (Brohm, 1982, p. 32) directly linked with the imperialist geographical expansion and the spread of the capitalist mode of production on a global scale (*ibid*, p. 43).

For the author, the sports institution is a system that has certain autonomy, but at the same time it is a subsystem of the global social system. In this sense, there is a constant relationship with other systems, which end up interconnecting, penetrating, and influencing each other (*ibid*, p. 28-29).

As a system that is part of a bigger whole, the sports institution is not only a product of the totality, but it also accumulates functions that give support to the maintenance of capitalist social relations, working as an Ideological State Apparatus.

### 2.4.1 Sports Institution as an Ideological State Apparatus

For Louis Althusser, the capitalist relations of production are reproduced in sociability through apparatuses that enable their consolidation and maintenance, both repressively and ideologically.

In this sense, the philosopher argues that there are State Repressive Apparatuses (the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc.), which mainly function by violence, and Ideological State Apparatuses.

The Ideological State Apparatuses are a plural number of realities that mainly function by ideology, which are present in different types of institutions, such as the religious (system of different churches) the educational (system of public and private 'schools'), the family, the legal, the political (political system, including different parties), the trade-union, the communications (press, radio and television, etc.), and the cultural (literature, the arts, sports, etc.) (Althusser, 1971, p. 7-8).

At the same time that the ruling class maintains its domination through the use of the State Repressive Apparatuses, the Ideological State Apparatuses keep the ruling ideology sustained through the functionality of its institutions, despite being crossed by inevitable contradictions.

The apparatuses are not isolated from each other; on the contrary, they constitute a large relational complex. For example, in the case of the sports apparatus, its professional sphere is directly connected with the economic instance of society. Military sports practice, on the other hand, is related to the political sphere. School and university sports are directly related to the pedagogical instance. And finally, the sport-spectacle, focus of this dissertation, is directly connected with the ideological instance (Brohm, 1982, p. 55).

Of course, these “limits” are only abstractions of language that serve as a tool to exemplify. In concrete reality, it is a big tangle in which all instances end up relating to each other, meanwhile they are all determined by capitalist relations of production.

Through the Althusserian construction, Brohm seeks to explore the functioning of the sports institution. According to the author, this sporting ideological state apparatus assumes a triple function:

- (i) Sport is an ideological State apparatus which fulfills a triple role: it ideologically reproduces bourgeois social relations such as selection and hierarchy, subservience, obedience etc.; secondly, it spreads an organizational ideology specific to the institution of sport, involving competition, records and output; and thirdly, it transmits on a huge scale the general themes of ruling bourgeois ideology like the myth of the superman, individualism, social advancement, success, efficiency etc.
- (ii) Sport is an ideological crystallization of permanent competition, which is presented as 'preparation for the struggle of life'.
- (iii) Sport is an ideology based on the myth of indefinite, linear progress, as expressed in the upward curve of sports records.
- (iv) Finally, sport is the ideology of the body/machine - the body turned into a robot, alienated by capitalist labor. Sport is based on the fantasy of the 'fit', productive body (Brohm, 1989, p. 76-77).



This ideological functionality of sport is only possible from a material organization of its whole apparatus, through federations, clubs and other institutions. Moreover, its operation needs the material support of the repressive institutions of the State, such as police and justice, for the orderly conduct of sports competitions and legal guarantee to its institutional entanglement (Brohm, 1982, p. 58).

To wit, far from being isolated, the sports apparatus is inserted in an articulated and structured way in the capitalist sociability (*ibid*, p. 55), it is a relatively autonomous organization that infiltrates, is infiltrated by other apparatuses (*ibid*, p. 60), and in the end it “contributes to the ideological reproduction of the social relations of production and to the maintenance of the established order. In short, sport is a powerful vehicle for the dissemination of the established ideology.” (*ibid*, p. 83, own translation).

As a great articulated relational complex, Brohm seeks to explore other types of functions that can be recognized in the functioning of the sport apparatus. For example, for the author, competitive sport has a repressive and alienating function that is present in school education, by consolidating a discipline favorable to the order of the capitalist system; it also has a mythological function, represented by the constitution of “heroes” that strengthen the meritocratic vision and the repeated militarized ceremonies, which are dominated by proto fascist rites (*ibid*, p. 77-78).

Although relevant, these functions cannot be deepened at this moment. For the purposes presented in this thesis, the focus will be on the issue of sport as “opium of the people”. This specific point is present in the following Brohm's classification on the political functions of sports:

- (i) By promoting identification with its champions, sport subtly inculcates attachment to the established order. As such sport has a function of stabilizing the present system. **(ii) Sport is an opiate of the people, turning the masses away from the socialist revolution and the class struggle: the function of diversion.**
- (iii) Sport is a means of regimenting youth (amply exploited by Hitler, Mussolini, Pétain, Franco and de Gaulle).
- (iv) Sport promotes class-collaboration, both within the enterprise in the form of Company sport, and in society as a whole by its pretension to political 'neutrality', by encouraging a reasonable dialogue between 'both sides of industry' who play the game according to a sort of 'sporting social contract' governed by an 'impartial referee' - the bourgeois state.
- (v) Sport is supposed to be an example of peaceful coexistence between 'states with different social systems' and thus serves to back up this counter-revolutionary policy
- (vi) Sport assists the powers that be to promote chauvinism, racism, nationalism and xenophobia among the masses.
- (vii) Sport is a powerful factor in the militarisation of society and the preparation for imperialist war - everyone knows how highly the army values sport... (BROHM, 1989, p. 76-77, emphasis added).

This classified function of sport as the “opium of the people” is present at several points in Brohm’s works. In the previous quote, from the book “Sport - A prison of measured time: essays by Jean-Marie Brohm”, it appears as a political function, however, in the chapter “Twenty Theses on Sport” (Brohm, 1989, p. 178), compiled in the same book, this function appears as part of the ideological functions of sports. Also, in the book “Sociología Política del deporte”, it appears in the section “Las funciones políticas internas del deporte: el papel positivista del deporte de competición” (Brohm, 1982, p. 120), which is translated to “the internal political functions of sports: the positivistic role of competitive sports”.

Despite these different classifications made by the author throughout his works, the ideological and political issues are relational elements that are imbricated in this “opium of the people” function. Therefore, it is believed that the most appropriate way to understand it, from Brohm’s work, is as a political-ideological function.

It is important to point out that this function is directly linked to the characteristic of sports as a mass spectacle, a phenomenon that was historically consolidated with the material changes of capitalist society, as seen in the first part of the chapter. For Brohm, mass sports spectacles are used in capitalist countries as a form of social entertainment that results in widespread political and ideological amnesia (Brohm, 1982, p. 120).

This happens from a relational combination between the sports apparatus and the communication apparatus that, besides creating an appearance that camouflages the concrete social reality, brings out an unreal and useless universe that involves people on a daily basis. This massive engagement around the sports spectacle results in an alienation of the masses (*ibid*).

The political and ideological consequence of this is the removal of focus from the struggle against the real social problems faced in contemporary capitalism. There is an emptying of political struggle: “In synthesis, at the precise moment in which the masses could reflect, cultivate themselves, and engage politically, sports come to occupy their spirit and divert them from real concerns to the benefit of serious pseudo-activities.” (Brohm, 1982, p. 120, own translation).

In the chapter “Twenty Theses on Sport” of the book “Sport - A prison of measured time: essays by Jean-Marie Brohm”, Brohm, in the twelfth thesis, reaffirms this depoliticizing character of the sport institution as a factor that stabilizes the prevailing system of capitalist relations of production.

Also, a metaphor is created around sporting competitions, over individual, collective, social and class struggles in the real world. It is like a metaphorical universe that relies on an

idea of a “sporting spirit” of collaboration between competitors and the merging of all social classes into a depoliticized whole (Brohm, 1989, p. 178). So, by taking the focus off the real political struggle and “transporting” it into an unreal “collaborative” world where classes are blurred, the political struggle in concrete sociability is emptied out.

In the seventeenth thesis, Brohm argues that sporting events fulfill the function of channeling the violent energy of the masses, through the regulation of a competitive activity in which there are permitted models of violence. This prevents the daily frustration and indignation of people from being directed against the established order, as a “neutralization” of a possible violence against the system (*ibid*, p. 180-181).

Therefore, the sport institution as a mass spectacle provides the emergence of an undifferentiated mass of people, and fills the minds of them with meaningless dramas. Thus preventing the fans from thinking about the real dramas experienced in capitalist sociability (*ibid*, p. 181).

In order to think about football, the most popular sport in the world, the reflection of this political-ideological function brought and argued by Brohm is extremely important. In this sense, the basis brought here of sports in general will be used to advance in the next topic which is the author’s critical theoretical construction about football in particular, seeking to deepen the issue of the “opium of the people”.

## 2.4.2 Football-Opium

### 2.4.2.1 The double totalization of football

To understand Brohm's theoretical construction of football, some critical arguments of the author present in the book “El Fútbol, una peste emocional” — a title that could be translated to “Football, an emotional plague” — which was written with Marc Perelman (Brohm; Perelman, 2018), will be taken up.

According to the authors, unlike the ideologues who seek to distinguish the “good” and “bad” sides of the football spectacle, their book is a work that seeks to respect the principle of the restitution of the concrete totality, based on materialist dialectics. In this sense, phenomena do not appear isolated in reality, but are always connected within a whole, relating internally and modifying each other (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 15-16)

For them, football is a “total social fact” that is under a dialectical double totalization (*ibid*). At the same time there is an internal totalization, since “all the institutional, economic, political, psychosocial, impulsive, etc., components of football interact with each other.” (*ibid*, p. 16, own translation), there is also an external totalization, “because football can only be truly understood when it is placed in its global context: the globalized capitalism of which it is the perfect mirror.” (*ibid*, own translation).

Thus, according to them, it is not possible to make a “cut” within the football totality in order to isolate one aspect from the others, looking for something “positive” that will culminate in a only partial analysis of this spectacle-sport. Likewise, it is not possible to analyze football beyond the capitalist totality of which it is a part, as if it were an alien body floating around, since it is directly connected to political, social, cultural and economic issues of this sociability. For example, trying to separate institutionalized football from money, or from politics, would be an example of an ideological exercise widely criticized by the authors.

From this viewpoint, several so-called “intellectual” analyses of football are in fact apologetic and ideological, making up what the authors call “football-opium” (*ibid*, p. 22).

Therefore, besides football being characterized as an opium of the masses, it is also an opium of the intellectuals who “close their eyes”, by bad faith or hypocrisy, to the social issues that accompany this sport, such as the constant cases of doping, corruption, the mercantile mafia, violence, racism, and the encouragement of hatred against the other (*ibid*, p. 16).

These analyses are characterized by the authors as uncritical and populist, and configure this search to “separate the wheat from the chaff”, trying to rescue a “positive” aspect to spectator football, as an idealism that believes in the possibility of rescuing football’s “soul”, restoring its authenticity beyond the problematic social issues that accompany it.

For Brohm and Perelman, the common view of the spectacle of football as a “popular fest” or “friendly meetings” is the expression of three forms of false consciousness that impede the understanding of the true nature of the football world: concealment, a form that hides corruption, tax evasion, fraud, and bribery related to the spectacle; idealization, which takes place by attributing heroism to champions, aestheticization of the game and goals as “beautiful”, together with an overvaluation of football’s educational virtues; and illusion, which makes one believe in the possibility of redirecting the football system and putting it at the service of social integration and cohesion (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 15).

In other words, these forms of false consciousness present an appearance that hides the true face of football and make an effective and rooted critical analysis impossible.

Thus, the work of Brohm and Perelman, besides being a criticism of the football spectacle itself, is also a criticism of the thinkers who idolize this world. For them, the passionate fans, in all their different definitions, are, together with the intellectuals, “hypnotized” by the football phenomenon.

#### 2.4.2.2 An emotional plague

For the authors, the passion for football is identified as a kind of “disease”, or, as they call it, an “emotional plague”, which spreads through society and leads to a massive regression of emotions and an archaic collectivism. In this collectivism, there is an imitation of the behavior of the other, an identification around the same colors, symbols, chants, uniforms, and flags, generating a state of submission of the individuals to the anonymous mass (*ibid*, p. 18).

According to them, the term "emotional plague", brought from the thought of Wilhelm Reich (Reich, 1974), has as main characteristics:

The reactionary ideological intoxication of the masses, through hatred for the other and with the same psychological nature of the fascist discourse. This characteristic allows us to understand how totalitarian governments use mass sports, such as football, to consolidate their political projects;

The second characteristic is the great power of contamination and subordination of individuals to the “horde” spirit, establishing general behaviors among people, such as conformism, fascination, and identification;

And finally, the third characteristic is the hatred of life as determinant, the passion to destroy, a fascination for death, for the battle against the “enemy” to assert a superiority. (*ibid*, p. 36-40).

This notion constructed by Reich to understand fascism is recovered by the authors to refer to the mass phenomenon of football-spectacle, as they consider that these characteristics fit well in the context of the sport.

In their perspective, the passion for football is a pandemic social pathology with psychological effects that affect the masses. Besides being extremely contagious, football is structurally an environment of hostility, in which there is an identity of belonging and hatred for the adversary, which creates a propitious field for the consolidation and dissemination of

fascist, racist, anti-semitic, xenophobic, homophobic, and sexist discourses (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 41).

This football environment also generates idolatry around individuals and mystical entities, represented by symbols and colors, resulting in episodes of collective delirium among the masses. In other words, the behavior of fans, hypnotized by the “passion” of football, often ends up being guided by external factors. These factors could be the defeat or victory of their clubs, creating feelings of happiness or sadness that “possesses” them to act collectively, which often generates actions of vandalism and violence (*ibid*, p. 28).

Thus, despite the fact that ideologues try to bring humanistic illusions about a popular and communal football, which is based on a logic of “sporting ideal” of social integration, fraternity, and fair play, the reality is that football has a logic of winning at any cost. This logic is further amplified at this current moment of football as a lucrative business. For the authors, the spectacle of football is a school of war (*ibid*, p. 26), and the reality of the stadiums is that they are environments of massive hate with constant cases of violence and discrimination (*ibid*, p. 41).

In summary, the qualification of football as an “emotional plague”, is represented in the following passage:

By describing football as an emotional plague, we wanted to insist on its mass psychological effects. The 'sporting passions' are not, in fact, anodyne collective emotions - 'identitarian' or 'egalitarian' - as the fans of the supposed 'festive vibrations' maintain with a beautiful unanimous impulse, but rather the expression of a pandemic social pathology. Football is the most insidious and universal manifestation of a form of social alienation that we could call, with Erich Fromm, the 'passion to destroy' (Brohm, Perelman, 2018, p. 25, own translation).

#### 2.4.2.3 Football as an “opium of the people”

Besides being an “emotional plague”, for the authors, football is also a true “opium of the people” (*ibid*, p. 47). As mentioned, Brohm considers that one of the functions of the sport institution in capitalist society is its political-ideological function of depoliticizing the masses, a role which is expressive in the football-spectacle environment.

Football is not “beyond” the capitalist system as an “ahistorical” cultural practice, but it is a typical institution of capitalism with genesis, structure, functioning and development directly linked to the capitalist mode of production. Currently, there is a true “football empire” in which a vast amount of money circulates around the planet with dominant federations, elite

clubs, and billionaire capitalist groups aiming for greater control of this ascendant market sector (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 52-54).

For the authors, globalization on the planet is not only configured by the production and circulation of commodities of all kinds, but also by the absolute domination of the world economy by capitalist logic. In this sense, in the 1990s globalization took a new moment, having the spectacle of football as an important vector, a kind of “new universal language of the people” (*ibid*, p. 156).

Through various propaganda tools such as:

[...] television, press, advertising, consulting, and marketing agencies, sponsors and advertisers, public and private companies, municipalities (both left-wing and right-wing), various associations, social organizations, and, finally, almost unanimous political formations [...] (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 47, own translation).

Football has been consolidated around the planet as the most popular sport.

However, behind the spectacles of matches, championships, and fan fests, there is a world with much more serious “games” of financial transactions, sponsorships, billionaire contracts, and corruption (*ibid*, p. 47). Thus, spectator-football is a specific organization of advanced capitalism (*ibid*, p. 56).

All this reality hides in the background of an “appearance” of football as apolitical, an ecumenical phenomenon that is above social classes, states and cultures. This factor helps ideologically in the reproduction of capitalist society (*ibid*), which many times ends up exploiting the fans themselves, who are blinded by their passion for the spectacle:

The ideological trolling of football by almost the entire population, and especially by the young people of the suburbs who receive the injection of this drug, convinced that the victory of the Blues was their victory, was aimed at gently imposing the commonplaces of the planet-football. This addiction prevents them from attacking the real causes of their situation and from thinking for themselves. It makes them especially unfit for the minimum social claim, for the minimum political struggle. In short, it is a question of not thinking, through football, more than in football. (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 209, own translation).

Therefore, football's political-ideological function of depoliticization is consolidated in reality through its contamination as an “emotional plague” in which the “passion” for football drives people away from thinking about their own living conditions under capitalism. Like an opium, it provides unification of thought around a “magical world” that alienates people from the concrete material world and the social problems faced in it (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p.

153). As a result, football prevents any hope of emancipation; it serves as a barrier to social demands (*ibid*, p. 157):

In England, as in Spain, France, Italy or Germany, football, far from contributing to the strengthening of class consciousness and worker solidarity, has always been, on the contrary, a pure instrument of political entertainment, a by-product of social struggle, a miserable lollipop to compensate the misery of the working class. (Brohm, Perelman, 2018, p. 176, own translation).

By capturing the attention of fans and intellectuals in an almost hypnotic way, any critical attempt to go “beyond” is blocked by the fascination with the spectacle, and football becomes closed in on itself. This means that the only proposal around football is its own claimed horizon as a place that cannot be thought outside its borders. That is, besides depoliticizing the masses about the reality “outside” football, the reflection on its own structures, functioning and political functions is impeded by its spectacular appearance (*ibid*, p. 225).

Therefore, for the authors, football does not manifest any relation of confrontation with capitalist sociability, since this system is the same one that reproduces the commodified world of football. In this regard, criticism for the authors needs a minimum distance, opposition, negation, as can be seen in this enlightening passage:

From this point on, we can ask ourselves in what way football, undoubtedly a social phenomenon, would be the expression of a struggle or of a political project that would oppose the society that generously supports it? What would be the place of a specific confrontation with reality? To pose the question is to answer it. Sport in general and football in particular do not manifest in fact any conflictive relationship with the society that produces and reproduces them. Therefore, they have never been places of criticism of society, since criticism presupposes a minimum of distance, of opposition, of negation. (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 226, own translation).

Nevertheless, among the several criticisms to “politicians, writers and philosophers” that have built reflections about football, seen by the authors as populists, the criticism made to Christian Bromberger's work “Football, la bagatelle la plus sérieuse du monde” (Bromberger, 1998), translated to “Football, the world's most serious trifle”, stands out, since it connects the question of whether there is potentiality of political struggle in football, even considering a sphere inevitably inserted in the capitalist totality.

According to the authors, Bromberger, through an ethnographic methodology of “participative observation”, fails to make explicit his position in relation to football. For them, the researcher tries to construct a work with a supposed “objectivity”, a false neutrality in the



analysis, which ends up concealing his position as a football fan (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 188).

Regarding the chapter titled “Opium of the people or exemplary drama?”, the authors argue that Bromberger does not discuss the critical theoretical construction on the question of football as opium of the people in its completeness, but restricts it to briefly argue that this analysis underestimates “the shifting and contradictory dimensions that this kind of collective manifestation can achieve” (Bromberger *in* Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 190, own translation).

And it is from the authors’ response to this statement by Bromberger that we can mostly build the dialogue proposed in this thesis. They argue that:

We have never denied that football matches could in some cases - under special circumstances - be transformed into protest demonstrations (against expensive life, the ruling regime or ‘US imperialism’), on the contrary, we have maintained that the practice of football in high doses (for the practitioners), the ‘hobby’ as a way of life (for the spectators), the mental obnubilation by the tireless drudgery of football propaganda (for the mass of viewers) functioned in effect as the opium of the people, that is to say, confusionist agglutination around an artificial paradise, with its derisory idols, its ingenuous slogans, its crowd noise and its mimetic violence. Whatever the political opinions of the one and the other (Bromberger came to perceive in the stands some anarchists of great heart...), when only football counts, any form of real politics, of struggles, of demands, the criticism of systemic acts of exploitation and domination, all this is broken by the irresistible power of the sporting spectacle. (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 190, own translation).

Here, the authors do not reject that in some cases, under special circumstances, football matches can be the stage for political protest demonstrations. However, when "only" football is counted as a lifestyle of people in love with an artificial world, immersed in apologetic propaganda, all the potency of political struggles and claims on the real world ends up broken by the irresistible characteristic of the football spectacle.

In conclusion, Jean-Marie Brohm and Marc Perelmann classify the football-spectacle as an “opium of the people” an “emotional plague” that contaminates the masses through a relationship with the communication apparatus. As a result of this political-ideological function of depoliticization, the moment that could serve for a political organization of the masses is wasted to accompany a fabricated, classless, collaborative and unreal world.

It is a commodified world of football in which people's daily frustration and indignation in the capitalist system are channeled by being transported into the football competition. Thus, possible revolts against the order of the system itself are neutralized, the dominant ideology prevails, and the people become incapable of socially claiming for a better life.

### 3 THE REBEL FANS OF FC ST. PAULI

#### 3.1 SITUATING THE CHAPTER

After establishing a theoretical background, the present thesis reaches a moment of greater concreteness in which the focus will be on the experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli.

FC Sankt Pauli is a German football club located in the city of Hamburg and named after the neighborhood in which it is located. The brown and white club was founded in 1910 and currently competes in the second division of the main German football league, the Bundesliga. The club's fans are internationally known as "rebels", "antisystemic", engaged in social struggles and positioned to the left on the political spectrum.

Based on this characteristic, the aim of this chapter is to understand the historical context of the emergence of this rebellion in the FC St. Pauli fan community and how this rebellion is present in the political activities of the last decades, inside and outside the Millerntor-Stadion. This exercise will provide conditions for the reflection proposed in the next chapter, combining this experience with a resumption of the ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway.

For the purpose of this chapter, a bibliographical research was carried out in several works that have already addressed the rebellious context of FC St. Pauli, including the ethnographic work of Mick Totten, which will be of utmost importance.

#### 3.2 THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE REBELLIOUSNESS

The emergence of the rebelliousness present in the FC St. Pauli can only be understood with a historical analysis of the space in which the club is located, the St. Pauli district.

Until the 17th century, the area where the district is located today was sparsely populated and unprotected, there were only a few religious groups, as well as gangs of pirates who went there from the river. Because it was not an area that favored settlement, the few people who ended up living there were daily workers, fishermen, sailors and craftsmen. In addition, a common business in the district was the manufacture of ropes for boats and oil

lamps, which made the space more difficult to inhabit, due to the noise and strong smell that these productions caused (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020, p. 25).

At the end of the 17th century, the Hamburg government ordered that hospitals and mental institutions had to be removed from the city and established in the area, as a result many people considered “undesirable” by the government began to reside there (*ibid*, p. 26).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the area underwent a major change and expansion as a result of an industrial growth linked to the activities of the port, which caused a large community of industrial working class people to move there, making the district a left-wing stronghold. At the same time that those people lived in precarious situations, several families of a local bourgeoisie connected to the maritime exchange and industrial companies moved into the area in more comfortable residences, creating an impactful spatial segregation (*ibid*, p. 26-27).

In 1910, members of this local bourgeoisie founded the club under the name of St. Pauli Turnverein and they only changed the name to FC St. Pauli in 1924, when the club officially participated in a championship (*ibid*, p. 29). It is interesting to mention that at that time FC St. Pauli was known locally as a right-wing bourgeois club to other more working-class clubs such as Komet Blankenese and Billstedt-Horn (*ibid*, p. 41).

Being connected with this port working class, the St. Pauli district was an extremely politically active space. There, various demonstrations took place and left-wing political organizations were established, especially during and after the First World War. For example, in November of 1918, 40,000 workers, soldiers, and sailors gathered together on Heiligengeistfeld to declare the creation of the Socialist Republic of Hamburg, which despite having much support, did not end up actually creating a revolutionary government (*ibid*, p. 31-32).

Before and during the Nazi regime the district was the stage of several conflicts, since there was a large presence of workers who were members of the Communist Party and social democrats. In 1927, the Nazis created a squad to fight these targets on the streets, also seeking to control the taverns (*kneipen*) in the area, which were places where local sailors and workers would meet. The growth of Nazis in Hamburg the following years meant an increasing number of clashes between them and leftists in St. Pauli (*ibid*, p. 42-43).

Nazi repression also affected the homosexual and transgender people who resided in St. Pauli and were seen by the Nazi-fascists as “antisocial” (*ibid*, p. 53-54). Likewise, it was in this district that several anti-Nazi resistance groups operated, such as the Bästein-Jacobs-Abshagen-Gruppe, which took action in shipyards by sabotaging war industry

activities, slowing down production speed and product efficiency (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020, p. 52).

In the post-war, during the 1950s, St. Pauli had its “golden” period with a great economic rise, establishing itself as a cultural and social epicenter, a space of extreme tolerance in which sailors, artists, strippers, prostitutes, homosexuals, and gangsters, freely cohabited. Around the same time, the district also became an epicenter for a music scene of young people influenced by the rise of rock’n’roll (*ibid*, p. 59).

The following decades brought moments of crisis for the district, due to bankruptcy of several shipping companies, which led to unemployment and also increased violence in the area (*ibid*, p. 69). In the 1980s, St. Pauli was being impacted by the rise of real estate speculation and the development of a sex industry, changing the area a lot and eventually forcing sailors and workers to leave it (*ibid*, p. 75-76).

For the FC Sankt Pauli, that decade meant the beginning of its transformation from a traditional club to a “kult club” that is known as today. At that moment, the club was witnessing one of its worst economic crises, there was even a risk of bankruptcy. In addition to not having money to sign athletes, the number of spectators was also decreasing at Millerntor-Stadion (*ibid*, p. 78-79).

However, in the mid-1980s, the club began its metamorphosis, which was directly linked with the political events in the district. In 1981, a group of activists occupied eight buildings on Hafenstraße, turning it into a symbol of resistance for the German autonomist movement. The following years were marked by several conflicts between these groups and the police forces, as well as solidarity marches and political action, as when, in 1987, 12,000 people gathered to support the occupations (*ibid*, p. 80).

These squatters movements of the 1980s represented a search for alternative ways of life, becoming known as “autonomists”:

A whole community experience that ‘rejected the little that the mainstream was able to offer them, to develop their own forms of alternative life with minimal interference by the state’. They were society’s outsiders who saw themselves reflected in Italian movements of the 1960s linked to the extra-parliamentary communist left (such as Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio). These youth did self-organization and direct action (strikes, squatting and street fighting) and became known as ‘autonomists’ (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020, p. 85).

In the first match of the 1986/1987 season, a group of about 60 young punks and autonomists related to those squats in Hafenstraße went to the Millerntor, which is less than 1 km away, to follow the FC St. Pauli match (Viñas; Parra; Stobart., 2020, p. 80) This group of

anti-fascists started to attend the stadium and support the club, it was a “block” that grew more and more, starting the consolidation of FC St. Pauli’s image as an alternative, anti-systemic, anti-capitalist club (*ibid*, p. 82).

Located in the Gegengerade sector, the block’s presence became more noticeable because of their chants that mixed politics and football, their black clothing, and the pirate flag they began to carry, which was characteristic of Hamburg’s squatting movements. The symbol of the skull with the crossbones, the Jolly Roger, represented for those punk groups a provocation against the authorities, against the system, in reference to the pirates who had also defied it in the past. It was a flag full of symbolism and history for the city of Hamburg, which had its own tradition of piracy (*ibid*, p. 92-93).

The Jolly Roger was introduced into the stands of Millerntor by Doc Mabuse, one of the punks who resided in the occupations. Mabuse later became disillusioned with the commercial paths taken by the club in the use of this flag. In any case, it was through this symbol that FC St. Pauli consolidated its nickname of “Pirates of the league” (*ibid*, p. 93).

Another important aspect in establishing FC St. Pauli’s fan community as a left-wing general fanbase was Millerntor Roar! (MR!). This fanzine, a magazine made for fans, signified a great originality in the insertion of the punk ethic and DIY (Do it yourself) into German football, which was dominated by mostly hooligan or right wing fanzines. The MR! had its first edition produced in one of the squats of Davidstraße on July 29, 1989, for the game against Werder Bremen at Millerntor, when 1000 copies were made (Sanderson, 2009, p. 75-76).

Millerntor Roar!, through a great use of satire, included match reports and club information, interviews and reviews of supporters’ scenes from other clubs in Germany and Europe. The fanzine also featured articles on local, national and international politics. In addition, it offered space for squatters of the Hafenstraße to write, serving also as a means of publicizing campaigns in support of the occupations. However, the aim of MR! was not to preach to the converted, that is, to reach only the block of left-wing supporters already linked to them, the intention was rather to use it to reach all other regular football supporters (*ibid*, p. 77-79).

Its success was enormous and during the production and distribution of its next 29 issues it became the best-selling football fanzine in the country, reaching a new audience (Sanderson, 2009, p. 80). Through its support for campaigns against racism and nationalism, Millerntor Roar! left a great legacy to FC St. Pauli fans and sympathizers around the country,

especially at a time when there was a rise of the extreme right in the stands of German football.

In this sense, while the FC St. Pauli's fans were consolidating their left-wing character; the process of neo-Nazi rise in the stands of German football was evident in the stands of their rival, Hamburger SV. As a consequence, many fans who did not feel safe with this rival club "migrated" to the Millerntor-Stadion during the 1980s, increasing FC St. Pauli and boosting its anti-fascist struggle (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020, p. 89-90).

Still in the 1980s, in this context of the growth of the far right and "hooliganism" in German football, "Fan projects" were emerging. Initially, one was established at Hamburger SV aiming to "educate young fans about the dangers of violence, political extremism, racism and alcohol abuse, while also providing them with a support network to raise their self-esteem and to overcome problems with drink and drugs." (Davidson, 2014, p. 125).

Subsequently, the "Fan Project" of FC St. Pauli was developed in 1989 by Sven Brunx, under the name of Fanladen. Brunx was one of the people responsible for establishing the Millerntor Roar!, having a lot of respect in the community. The premise of Fanladen was to be a space independent of the club and at the service of fans' interests. Initially, the central task was to sell tickets and organize transport to away games.

Those away games' train journeys, which united the fans, played an essential role to spread the FC St. Pauli fans' alternativism and to fight against the far right in the realm of ideas. Besides drinking, smoking and singing, the fans also talked about politics and the most activist ones, about 20, 30 people, started to raise awareness among other fans who had a discourse aligned with the extreme right. In addition, Fanladen was responsible for making and giving away millions of stickers with the words "St. Pauli Fans Gegen Rechts" (St. Pauli Fans against the Right), with an image of a fist destroying a swastika, which became known worldwide (*ibid*, p. 126-128).

Before long, Fanladen had become the hub of FC St. Pauli's fan culture. In addition to selling tickets and products made by the fans themselves, it became "a meeting point for like-minded individuals, a place to discuss politics, drink and organize protests whether that be against the Nazis or against threats to the local area from continuing gentrification." (Davidson, 2014, p. 128). Since then, Fanladen has not been restricted to club issues, it is a space for political organization in which projects are built for the local community, working mainly with young people in relation to drug problems and fighting against police oppression (Davidson, 2014, p. 131).

Currently, the Fanladen is located in the Millerntor, attached to the Gegengerade sector. It is one of the most respected and admired fans projects in Europe and it is very important for the organization of the FC St. Pauli fan community (*ibid*, p. 133).

Therefore, this period of the 1980s was instrumental in consolidating the rebelliousness that FC St. Pauli fans are known for. It was an organic and relational process, based on the events that took place in the district where the club is located.

If today there is still a portion of “rebel” fans who act politically inside and outside the club on social issues and projects with a critical, anti-systemic and anti-capitalist perspective, this is due to the historical establishment of this radicality.

### 3.3 THE REBELLIOUSNESS IN RECENT TIMES

To understand rebelliousness in a more recent period, the ethnographic work of Mick Totten will be of great help. Totten spent a decade attending the Millerntor, conducting interviews and seeking to better understand the atmosphere of the FC St. Pauli. This informal ethnographic work resulted in two articles that will be used in this thesis, “Sport activism and political praxis within the FC Sankt Pauli fan subculture” (2015) and “Football and community empowerment: how FC Sankt Pauli fans organize to influence” (2016).

FC St. Pauli fans, like other football fans in the world, are formed by several groups. Among them, there are the Ultras Sankt Pauli (USP), one of the most active groups of fans in the stadium with their chants, banners, flags and choreographies. It is a group that despite bringing many political images and banners to the stands, they also participate in events and projects beyond Millerntor, for example, they do some work with refugees and bring them to the games to welcome them in the community.

Another group that stands out for its activism are the Sankt Pauli Skinheads, who are always present at protests and activities of the fan community. This group was founded in 1996, is largely anti-fascist and seeks to preserve the roots of skinhead culture, such as the ‘rude boy’ image and reggae. For them, fascist skinheads are a distortion of the movement (Totten, 2016, p. 707-708).

These and several other groups relate to each other, forming a large network of fans. A network that is organized through respect, tolerance and mutuality between the different groups that make it up. It is a large relational complex, with no formal partnership between the groups, like an autonomous organism in which everyone is united but also separated in these sub-communities that act in different ways from each other (Totten, 2016, p. 707). In

this sense, although Fanladen is important to the fan community, this organization that forms among fans is autonomous from the Fan Project (*ibid*, p. 704).

The fan community is organized from a few people who take on leadership roles, but this happens from fluid and temporal processes and not from the creation of positions of power. The fans who participated in Totten's work emphasize this struggle against hierarchical power relations within the community: "There is no one who speaks for all other groups" (Totten, 2016, p. 708).

Therefore, even with the organizational processes resulting in the emergence of an "inner circle" with about 1000 most active fans from the different sub-communities, this "core" is not at a higher hierarchical level in comparison to other fans, they do not control the fan base, they only exert an influence by the very respect they have earned over the years (*ibid*, p. 709).

They are a more activist group who, in addition to supporting and following the team regularly, also engage daily in other political activities of the fan community. It should be emphasized though, that this "core" of supporters should not be reduced to a narrow definition or a singular political orientation. It is a group established through an organic movement of active people, which makes it impossible to be sure of how many fans are actually part of it. Therefore, there is a dynamism of who is in this "inner circle" by the daily practice itself:

The inner circle are not just regular football fans they are highly motivated and ingenious political and community activists. Estimates vary about their number, but most participants agreed there were between 1000 and 3000. The capacity of the Millerntor home stadium has varied but is now around 29,000 and generally sold out. There are many other Sankt Pauli fans, possibly more than eleven million worldwide, and a core 1000 may seem like an obvious minority. However the influence of the core is fundamental, and for any other predominantly local organization a similar sized core of highly committed political activists is formidable; they are the bedrock of what makes Sankt Pauli admired and unique. (Totten, 2015, p. 463).

According to Totten's ethnographic research, this core of supporters was described by some participants as a coalition of activists, anti-fascists, anti-racists, anti-homophobes, feminists, anarchists, socialists, and communists, generally positioned on the left (Totten, 2015, p. 463).

Here, it is important to highlight the differentiation present in Totten's research. Meanwhile many fans are there just for the football matches, there is also this group of fans that are more politically active, both inside and outside of Millerntor Stadion, which ends up



maintaining the “rebelliousness”, influencing the general image of a rebel club that Sankt Pauli has earned worldwide (*ibid*, p. 462).

This does not mean that there is an isolation of these politically active supporters from others, on the contrary, they have a lot of respect in the community. Usually, the political agenda forged by these fans collectively is widely accepted by the rest of the fan base (*ibid*). Moreover, these activist fans always encourage other fans to become more politically active, sometimes even with a tone of criticism towards those who “surf” the club’s rebellious and “trendy” image but do not actually engage as they could:

Fans were also disdainful of the superficiality and passivity of some who maybe only supported Sankt Pauli because it was trendy and who only ‘go to the ground and take their seat and leave after the game’ [...] although the majority of fans were ‘politically minded’ many were not ‘politically active’. They felt there should always be a balance between football support and political support and that there was an ongoing mission to be inclusive, to politicize and empower others. (Totten, 2016, p. 715)

In this sense, there is a great search to bring more supporters to the concrete political activities organized by this more active core. It is a constant search to strengthen its political ideals and the sense of community between supporters and the district.

### 3.3.1 The rebels’ political praxis in the district

The rebel fans of FC St. Pauli carry out and organize political activities that go beyond the stadium, focused especially on the local community of the district. This constant engagement with the space ends up blurring the boundary between the district and the club, although there is obviously a difference, as not all district residents support FC St. Pauli. In any case, if there is a social concern in the district it becomes a concern of the fans (Totten, 2016, p. 709-710). This active organization of the fans has even attracted activist people who were initially not connected to football and started to support the club, participating in the community inside and outside the stadium (Totten, 2015, p. 459).

In this sense, these “rebel” fans do not only identify with the club, but also with the district. It is a symbiotic relationship. They influence the community and the community influences the fans. Thus, district residents also benefit from the activity of the club’s rebel fans, since despite their actions in the community, these fans make local problems reach greater public attention using football as a platform (Totten, 2016, 710-711).

For these activist fans who contributed to Totten's research, the district's local problems are:

Fans characterized many local problems common to other inner urban areas. These included poverty, unemployment, homelessness, low educational attainment particularly amongst a large migrant population, inter-generational issues between the young and old, and oppression by the state and police against alternative lifestyles, 'against people they don't like; squatters, people who live in vans, graffiti sprayers, left radical youth'. (Totten, 2016, p. 710)

Among some actions of the rebels of FC St. Pauli to fight against these problems with the community are: social projects in schools, with young people and with community groups; campaigns to welcome refugees; campaigns against racism, fascism, homophobia and gentrification; actions against rising rents and homelessness; actions against the transportation of nuclear waste, the government, imperialist wars and police oppression (Totten, 2015, p. 458; Totten, 2016, p. 714).

These fans have ties to various social movements (Totten, 2016, p. 715), engage in projects, protests, campaigns and demonstrations in the community, and end up carrying the rebellious legacy built in the 1980s with "inherited traditions of agitprop tactics, street protest and direct action" (*ibid*, p. 710).

Thus, the characteristic rebelliousness of FC St. Pauli's supporters historically emerged under the influence of political events in the district. In that period in the 1980s it was a group of rebellious "left-wing" people who started to attend the Millerntor, changing the stand organically.

More recently, from the ethnographic work of Totten, what is observed is a double process, in which it is not only the politics of the district that influences this fan rebellion, but the fan rebellion itself influences the politics of the district. In this sense, politically engaged people who were not connected to football were attracted to FC Sankt Pauli; non-engaged fans are encouraged to participate more actively in the political life of the community; young fans are politically educated.

The more engaged fans use the football club as a tool for political praxis. They take advantage of the popularity of the sport to effectively act in the community, to attract other fans, and to propagate their political perspectives.

### 3.3.2 The rebels' struggle against commodification

Despite the common thought that FC St. Pauli is a rebellious club in its entirety, by the image that circulates around the world, for Totten, it is important to make a separation between the autonomous activities of the rebel fans and the administration (Totten, 2015, p. 453).

This is due to the fact that there is always a dilemma experienced by the administration (Daniel; Kassimeris, 2013, p. 14), in which “the club is caught between the commercial inducements and ‘imperatives’ of professional football, and the political integrity of the fans” (Totten, 2015, p. 460). Therefore, if on one hand adapting to the commercial logic of current football seems necessary to keep the squad competitive, on the other hand, there is a great resistance from fans who do not want to adapt to this logic completely.

This dilemma was well expressed by former coach Holger Stanislawski in a 2010 interview with CNN journalist James Montague. In that interview, Stanislawski brought up the perspective of those responsible for the front office:

‘Some fans don’t like it, merchandising [and other commercial considerations] and want us to play in the third league [...] But if you want to play in the Bundesliga you must go this way, you must build a new stadium. We have €50 [\$64] million for this season, everyone else has €80 [\$102] million. But you must be St. Pauli too. And that’s the difficult thing here.’ (Montague, 2010)

This dilemma often causes episodes where the relationship between fans and administration becomes completely antagonistic. There is a constant tension with continuous surveillance by the “leftist” rebel fans regarding the directions taken by the administration. And this tension ends up expanding among the fans themselves, while some do not care about commodification and only care about results on the pitch, these more politically engaged fans want to keep the rebellion “alive”, even if it means giving up a more competitive team (Totten, 2015, p. 560-461).

This antagonism between incessant profit and resistance is evident from some concrete episodes that occurred in the club, such as the use of the Jolly Roger symbol for commercial purposes and the “Sozialromantiker” movement.

As seen, the Jolly Roger symbol is internationally recognized as the “representation” of FC St. Pauli’s rebellion, carrying the history of the anti-systemic and anti-capitalist image established in the 1980s.

After the administration was authorized to use the current design of this symbol for free by the fans, it ended up buying it in October 2000 through the company St. Pauli Vermarktungs GmbH & Co. KG, due to its enormous popularity (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020,

p. 176). However, after a major financial crisis, including causing the club to face bankruptcy in 2002 (Daniel; Kassimeris, 2013, p. 12), the right to use the symbol was sold to a company called Upsolut Merchandising in 2004, which became contractually responsible for the sale and use of the symbol until 2034 (Viñas; Parra; Stobart., 2020, p. 176).

However, this issue of the license agreement was the subject of litigation for years between the club and Upsolut (*ibid*), the aim of FC St. Pauli's management was to further explore such a large income from the sale of its "rebel" image. Finally, in 2016, FC St. Pauli "recovered" the right to use the Jolly Roger after buying the company Upsolut for 1.3 million euros (St. Pauli, 2015).

The symbol, therefore, emerged historically as a representation of a rebellion against the system, but in a society where everything takes the form of commodity, it has been absorbed into the capitalist logic and today is a major source of income. The Jolly Roger "brand" is fundamental to marketing and is widely used by the club's management:

Logos can be used to express our identity, and skilful marketing assures that this identity is provided for the logo. When part of branding, such a logo, even if innocently introduced, becomes part of its commodification, commodifying what is associated with it [...] Brand awareness arises by cultivating associations with the brand (FC St. Pauli) and intangible values (leftism, anti-establishment). Against this background, anticonsumerism may well disguise consumption (Daniel; Kassimeris, 2013, p. 12-13).

This process of subsumption by the commodity-form, despite appearing automatic, also faces resistance within the capitalist totality itself. In this sense, for many fans, this wide commercial use of the symbol is a cause for great indignation, resulting in unconventional practices in the world of football "[...] many fans reject official club merchandise and elect to create their own DIY clothing, banners and other apparel in Sankt Pauli colors with symbols of their own." (Totten, 2015, p. 461-462).

In this case, DIY (Do it yourself) is a way used by fans to resist and demonstrate their indignation at the path of commercialization of the club. It is an attempt to preserve the principles that permeate FC St. Pauli, a struggle against the advance of capitalism in football, even if it means less financial resources to the administration of the club they support.

A similar situation of antagonism between management and fans occurred after the club's highly successful sporting season in 2009/2010, in which FC St. Pauli was promoted to the top division of Bundesliga. This promotion meant for the club more than an opportunity to play against the richest teams in the country through the 2010/2011 season, but also

represented another moment when contradictions, disagreements and struggles from off the pitch became evident.

The first evidence of this divergence was a change that occurred in one of the sections of Millerntor: the “Haupttribüne”. Before the season, this section was attended by “ordinary” fans who preferred to watch the games seated, however, in the 2010/2011 season it started to have half of its 4800 seats sold by the club’s management as business seats to corporate clients (Davidson, 2014, p. 175).

In the same period, the management decided to negotiate the title of official club drink with the “Kalte Muschi” brand, which in English means “Cold Pussy” (*ibid*, p. 176). Also, the management of FC St. Pauli negotiated a space in the stadium with the strip club “Susis Show Bar”, which is located in the district. The agreement was for the establishment of a bar with a pole-dancer inside the Millerntor-Stadion to “entertain” the fans. These episodes were seen as major affronts to the idea that FC St. Pauli is a club that mobilizes on gender issues and values being anti-sexist. It was felt by several fan groups as a “punch in the stomach” given by the management (Viñas; Parra; Stobart, 2020, p. 162).

In another marketing move, the club’s management, partnering with an internet provider, installed for the season a LED screen in the stadium capable of displaying SMS text messages sent by supporters. In addition, the screen was also used as a means of displaying advertisements. This episode made the relationship between fans and management even more troubled, as many understood that something like this should not exist in a football stadium like Millerntor. (Davidson, 2014, p. 177).

These events were typical of a period of commodification that was happening within FC St. Pauli, spearheaded by the management in search of higher financial returns to compete in the first division of Bundesliga, and accepted by some fans, but not all.

On December 22, 2010, just 6 days after the installation of the LED screen, a fan movement called “Sozialromantiker Sankt Pauli” — which took its name from a twist of the insult made by the club’s president to fans who supposedly had a “backward”, “unrealistic” view, contrary to the modern business model — launched a virtual manifesto called “Enough is Enough” that began with the following words: “It won’t go on like this anymore. We say stop” (*ibid*, p. 178).

For the movement, made up of an undefined number of anonymous fans, these commercial changes that were taking place at the club should stop, it was a critical moment and the fan resistance should be mobilized to preserve what represented the fanbase of FC St. Pauli (Hauth, 2011).

In the manifesto, the fans recognized the team's sporting success last season, the importance of enlarging the stadium and the need to have income in order to have a competitive team. However, according to the fans, on the other hand there is a desire to preserve the ideals of FC St. Pauli, which is "like an island in a world which is only interested in the monetary value of everything" (Hauth, 2011).

Metaphorically, the movement stated that it is as if there were two pedestals, one of them symbolizing the income of the club and the other the ideals of the fans. Both were necessary and balanced, but the hole between them was getting bigger and bigger because of the actions of the administration that was irresponsibly moving towards commodification.

A year before the manifesto, a congress with the fans took place in which it was decided by them that "we all rather do without some of the modern football's temptations even if they might be financially interesting" (Hauth, 2010), and some guidelines were established that should be defended in preserving the uniqueness of FC St. Pauli:

[...] social and political bonded to the district St.. Pauli; 90 minutes football without being a commercial event; a timeframe of 5 to 10 minutes before kick-off in which only the fans may be responsible for any acoustics in the stadium; no contracts with sponsors which may be suspected to be fascist, racist, homophobic or connected with wartime economy; no sale of the stadium's name; no ways of commercial advertisement which could distract from the match; a dialogue between supporters and club-management in questions of the implementation of these guidelines; distribution of tickets in way that respects the interests of the club members. (Hauth, 2011).

However, these guidelines agreed at the congress were not being respected, as observed in the actions of the club, which was exponentially increasing the "gap" between the "pedestals". Therefore, the manifesto said "enough" and stipulated some demands that had to be followed or open resistance actions would take place. Some of these demands were: the removal of advertisements in the minutes before the start of the matches; the end of the partnership with the strip club; the end of LED screens and advertisements during the matches; the partial transformation of business seats to normal and affordable ones (Hauth, 2011).

Within a few days, by the end of 2010, more than 3,000 fans had signed the manifesto. The movement also chose to use an adaptation of the Jolly Roger symbol, as a "re-appropriation" of rebelliousness, but instead of the traditional symbol, the Sozialromantiker decided to use a red background, calling it the "Jolly Rouge". The interesting fact is that the red flag was used by pirates when they wanted to take "no quarter"

or no prisoners, which represented well the rebellion of the movement (Davidson, 2014, p. 180).

The first game at the Millerntor after the winter break, on January 4, 2011 against Freiburg, was marked by an action of the Sozialromantiker, as the management continued to deny the demands of the group. On that day, the strength of the movement was expressed in reality. After a great campaign, thousands of fans brought flags, shirts, banners and stickers with the symbol of the Jolly Rouge, transforming the stadium into a red mass that sang unitedly “Bring back St. Pauli to me”. In addition to the actions inside the stadium, the movement still took to the streets after the game, uniting their causes within the club with the causes of struggle of the district’s own community, it was a true expression of collective rebellion, or, in other words, a great pirate mutiny:

In pirate terms it would be classed as a mutiny by fans against the leadership of the club, with the supporters wresting back the identity of the club from the money men. In the short term at least, the day had exceeded all expectations. After the game somewhere between 500-1,000 fans defied the rain to march in solidarity with the district of St. Pauli through the streets. The movement had expanded beyond football. Under the banner of 'Bring Back Sankt Pauli - Reclaim Your District', fans and residents gathered on the paved area outside the Südkurve to protest against the creeping gentrification and unsightly urban regeneration that was not only depriving residents of social spaces but that continued to force rents in an upward spiral, thus forcing out those people at the very heart of the St. Pauli community. (Davidson, 2014, p. 182)

The most expressive result of these actions was the resumption of the dialog between fans and management. The club was not transformed immediately, that would be impossible, but over time some measures demonstrated the impact of the movement, for example, the LED screen was uninstalled already in the next game and the contract with Susi’s Show Bar was not renewed for the following season (Davidson, 2014, p. 183). In this sense, this movement managed to “slow down” the aggressive process of commodification of the club, at least for a period of time.

These examples demonstrate how the rebel fans are in a constant “tug-of-war” relationship with the administration to prevent an unbridled advance of the commodity-form in their club, seeking to keep the anti-systemic flame alive. In summary, the struggle of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli can be summed up by the following passage from Totten:

Fans have challenged power and oppression, cultivated critical consciousness, promoted leftist libertarian thought, and politicized the fan base. Sankt Pauli has created thousands of activists who inhabit a richly saturated political theater, a weekly carnival of football, politics, protest and fun. Fans have been vigilant and kept the commercializing tendencies of their own club in check and sustained an

authentic grassroots fan culture in the process admired by many others. Through thoughtful action, fans have addressed underlying structural issues and sustainably demonstrated the potential of football for transformative community empowerment and radical community action. And fans have guarded against complacency by vigorously defending the idea that they are supporting a cause, not just a football club, and from that; they organize to influence. (Totten, 2016, p. 717)

Therefore, St. Pauli fans' rebellious experience shows that the football club's fan community goes far beyond football, but without ceasing to use it as a tool to build solidarity ties, to act in its political praxis, inside and outside the stadium, to increase political engagement within the community and the district, and to fight against the advance of the commodity-form within the club, seeking to resist the logic of the commodified world of football that portrays income as its most important aspect.



## **4 THE REBELS OF FC ST. PAULI IN THE COMMODIFIED WORLD OF FOOTBALL: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN JEAN-MARIE BROHM AND JOHN HOLLOWAY**

### **4.1 SITUATING THE CHAPTER**

Finally, we come to the most decisive moment of this thesis. After three chapters that sought to establish a basis for this reflection, now, the main ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway will return for a proposal of dialogue between these authors on the possibility or not of recognizing emancipatory potentialities in the commodified world of football, having as background the experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli. It is believed that the relevance of this proposal is mainly because both authors are part of different moments of Marxist thought.

To this end, the beginning of this chapter sets out to recapitulate some key points from the experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli, relating it to the historical and inevitable connection between football-spectacle and capitalist social forms, which was raised at the beginning of the second chapter.

Next, the main ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm in his critique of modern sports, and football specifically, will be revisited, already relating them to this rebellious experience.

And finally, John Holloway's contribution will come into play to demonstrate the differences of his Marxism with Brohm's Marxism, and how this can aggregate to understanding anticapitalist struggles that exist within football, as is the case with the experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli.

### **4.2 REBELS x THE COMMODIFIED WORLD OF FOOTBALL**

Football is inevitably immersed in the forms of capitalist social relations, it is not possible to think of an institutionalized, competitive, professional football, without thinking about the commodity, value, money, and even, in the legal and political forms that characterize this present sociability.

As seen in the second chapter, from a process of subsumption by forms of capitalist social relations, playful activities practiced by people started to have the “shape” of modern sports in the early 18th century. At that time of the rise of British capitalist industrial society,

there was this dialectical process of rupture-conservation, causing old activities to acquire a new format based on mercantile society. Thus, there was a process of commodification in which people paid to watch the games, competitors received money to play, and bettors deposited large amounts on the results. This capitalist logic began to format these activities, together with the legal and political forms typical of bourgeois society.

In this sense, general codifications came into existence to regulate these activities and make them more conducive to exchange relations. The notion of “subject of law”, typical of capitalist society, came to be mirrored in the “sports subjects”, who engaged in competitions on opposite sides, with an abstract formal equality and under a common rule. At the same time, the figure of the State as a “third party” guarantor of capitalist relations, came to be represented by the referee, who guaranteed the “fair competition” between the practitioners of these modern sports that were emerging.

It was within this baseline format of modern sport that institutionalized professional football, as we know it, was established from the last three decades of the 19th century. This takes place at the same time as modern sports are becoming mass spectacles, driven by a large industrial working class, a unified British national culture and a mass newspaper press. In this context, football, by moving to a written, formal, objective system of regulation, and with a greater acceptance of professionalism, assumed a place of prominence and popularity in relation to other sports, even becoming internationalized beyond British geographical limits.

The 20th century meant a consolidation of football as the most popular sport in the world, influenced by structural and material changes that occurred within capitalist sociability, especially in communications with the advent of radio, and later, television. These and other events have made football increasingly popular, becoming a great mass spectacle, signifying a greater advance of capitalist logic within its context. Today, with the internet, football’s world is a dynamic sector that moves billions of dollars a year, following the dynamics of capitalist society.

In this sense, although consolidated when the forms of capitalist social relations were already dominant, the relationship between football and capitalism is not static, it is connected with the very dynamism, adaptivity, contradictions and struggles that occur within this social totality.

Thus, in addition of being possible to affirm that the world of football is commodified, since it arises already in this format of the commodity society, there is also a constant force imposed by the commodity-form and other forms of capitalism as a commodifying process, which seeks to adapt the world of football more and more to the logic of the system.

As seen in the last chapter, FC St. Pauli's management has had episodes where they move more in the commercial direction of football, in an exercise of looking for more income to make the team competitive, be it by selling its "rebellious" image, by closing "questionable" partnerships with sponsors, or by altering the Millerntor Stadion, such as when corporate tickets started to be sold in a known popular section

This example of dynamism within the club itself, shows how football is always moving in accordance to capitalist trends.

Contrary to a possible first impression and a desire to judge, this advance towards commercialization as a management practice to raise revenue should not be seen as "immoral" by critical thinking when reflecting about capitalism and football. This is because criticism of capitalist sociability must always seek materiality, and it is possible to understand that the administration is only following its role in a football world that is subsumed by the logic of capitalism and in a constant process of commodification. Here, it should not be intended to seek a "moral superiority", everyone and everything are under the shape of capitalist social forms.

Social forms, as seen, are "behind" our consciousnesses, it is not an option to follow them. They determine our social life, they are modes of existence of our relations, and the episodes in which the administration of FC St. Pauli has moved more towards commercialization, is merely an accompaniment of the dynamism of football in capitalism, and not necessarily an exclusive "choice" of this club.

In this sense, to have a competitive team in this context, it is inevitable to seek more income in order to hire better players. This need can be compared to the need that people have to relate through the capitalist format in their social lives, such as to buy food, water, clothing, or anything else that satisfies them, since everything is in the form of commodity, including aspects within the football context.

In other words, social forms, as seen, are "behind" our consciousnesses, it is not an option to follow them. They determine our social life, they are modes of existence of our relations, and the episodes in which the administration of FC St. Pauli has moved more towards commercialization, is merely an accompaniment of the dynamism of football in capitalism, and not necessarily an exclusive "choice" of this club.

In any case, this does not mean to say that this process of subsumption to capitalist forms and logic is automatic. In the context of FC St. Pauli, this process of "cohering", through this constant force that pulls the club to the logic of the system, also faces resistance

from its own fans, through actions and protests that seek to move in the opposite direction, against the logic of the capitalist system.

The rebel experience within the fan community began in the 1980s when a group of punks and autonomists, participating in the occupations on Hafensstraße, formed a fan block and fundamentally changed the club. This group, with its characteristic pirate flag, grew increasingly and spread its “left-wing” political ideas through the fanzine *Millerntor Roar!* and *Fanladen*, spaces that served as a means to discuss politics beyond the pitch. Moving from that, anti-fascist and anti-capitalist defiance became not only part of FC St. Pauli, but also served, and serves, as a guide for the following generations of fans in actions inside and outside the Millerntor.

If at the beginning of this historical experience, it was a “left-wing” group of people who started to go to the Millerntor, it is now possible to affirm that the process also goes in the opposite direction, in which fans become “left-wing” because they support FC St. Pauli and are immersed in this fan community.

This experience will be better reflected in the next point, when related to the ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway.

#### 4.3 A DIALOGUE BETWEEN JEAN-MARIE BROHM AND JOHN HOLLOWAY

As worked out in the second chapter, Jean-Marie Brohm, under the influence of Louis Althusser’s theoretical production, understands the modern sport institution, as an Ideological State Apparatus that fulfills several functions for the conservation of the capitalist mode of production, at the same time that it articulates directly with other apparatuses, infiltrating and being infiltrated by them

For the author, this apparatus is a powerful tool for the dissemination of the established ideology, contributing then to the ideological reproduction of the capitalist society and the maintenance of the system’s order.

One of these functions assumed by the sports apparatus, especially related to mass spectacle-sports, is the political-ideological function of being an “opium of the people”.

It is a depoliticizing function, in which the sporting events are ways to entertain the masses, leading people away from the class struggle and revolution. It moves the focus from the real social problems faced under capitalism to an artificial and useless world.

Therefore, in other words, this political-ideological function of “opium” hides the reality behind a fake world of entertainment, neutralizing the indignation that could be

organized against the capitalist system. Consequently, it helps to maintain the capitalist order with an emptying of the political struggle.

Football, as the most popular sport in the world, besides having this function of opium, according to Jean-Marie Brohm and Marc Perelman, is also an “emotional plague”, an extremely contagious disease that affects people psychologically and, like fascism, it is an environment that cultivates reactionary hatred of the other, subordinating individuals to a horde that wants to “destroy” the opponent within a logic of winning at any cost. In this sense, as an extremely contagious disease, its functioning as opium acquires a very great power in the preservation of the present sociability.

As seen, football for the authors should be studied from a double dialectical totalization.

Firstly, it is argued that football can only be truly understood when it is not “isolated” from the global capitalist context from which it emerges and structures, as a first moment of totalization.

Also, all components of football are interacting with each other. Therefore, seeking to “isolate” aspects considered “good” in football from others considered “bad”, ends up making it impossible to understand its true nature.

In this sense, the so-called “football-opium”, besides being the opium of the masses, is also the opium of intellectuals who believe it is possible to make that separation, closing their eyes to the social problems that are inevitable within this sport-spectacle, such as: doping, corruption, racism, the mercantile mafia and hatred of the other.

Football as a mass sport spectacle is a typical institution of capitalism, with its genesis, structure, functioning and development directly linked to the capitalist mode of production.

However, this practice of separating it from the totality, overshadows its concrete reality, giving the appearance that it is something “apolitical”, ecumenical, above social classes, but in fact, there this real world going on behind its scenes in which several much more serious capitalist “games” are being played, with billionaire transactions, contracts and sponsorships.

Thus, the appearance provided by the football-spectacle, besides hiding its own reality, also hides the reality of capitalist society in general, and makes possible its political-ideological function as a depoliticizing “opium”. Consequently, the authors believe that there is a barrier to any hope of critical potential through football. For them, sports in general, and football specifically, do not manifest any confrontational relationship with the

capitalist sociability of which they are part, since criticism presupposes a minimum distance, a minimum negation.

Therefore, this reflection of the authors results in an idea that football is far from contributing to the strengthening of class consciousness and workers solidarity, on the contrary, it has always been an entertainment tool to compensate for the misery experienced in the capitalist mode of production.

In a passage of criticism of Christian Bromberger brought up in the second chapter (p. 42), the authors acknowledge that under certain special circumstances, football matches can become protest demonstrations, and that Bromberger did indeed encounter “good-hearted anarchists” in his ethnographic research with fans in France. However, it is argued that “[...]when only football counts, any form of real politics, of struggles, of demands, the criticism of systemic acts of exploitation and domination, all this is broken by the irresistible power of the sporting spectacle.” (Brohm; Perelman, 2018, p. 190, own translation).

What is interesting to reflect from this passage is that despite having previously stated that football is a social factor that is inserted in the capitalist totality and that it must be analyzed as something inevitably connected with all the social, economic, political and cultural factors that characterize this sociability. Here, what is done is an exercise of abstraction of football, isolating it from the totality, by stating that any real form of political struggle is broken “when only football counts”.

However, thinking from the totality, this raises a number of questions. How would it be possible to “count” only football? Wouldn’t that be moving in the opposite direction of the totalization advocated by the authors? If the capitalist totality is permeated by social forms, contradictions, antagonisms and struggles, is it possible to separate all these factors from football? Is it not all part of the same totality? If the struggle is supposedly “neutralized” by the football-spectacle, does it mean that it is also neutralized just by existing within the totality?

Thus, while criticizing those who try to separate the positive and the negative aspects of football, this passage by the authors demonstrates a similar “cut” to rule out the potentiality of anti-systemic resistance in this context. This process of isolating it from the totality serves both as an attempt to understand its “good” sides, which was widely criticized by the authors, and as this attempt to understand it as an inevitably depoliticizing spectacle, which can be separated from the social relations of struggle that take place within capitalism

A proposal of “retotalization” may indicate that absolutely everything is part of the totality. Football, as a spectacle-sport that effectively serves as “opium”, stands side by side

with critical potentialities, and, in the case of FC St. Pauli's fans, it even serves as an instrument of struggle, for propaganda and political engagement against social problems of capitalist society.

The whole experience of the rebels of FC St. Pauli would not exist as it does if it were not for football, it is not possible to separate it from football. It is clear that because it exists in this context, and internally to the totality, it presents contradictions and challenges, but this occurs with all struggles forged within the capitalist totality, since we are all determined by its forms of social relations.

As a first impression, this affirmation may cause some astonishment as something extremely contradictory, and it is. And what is not contradictory within the capitalist totality? Contradiction is part of living within this sociability in which preservation and overcoming are in constant relation inside the totality itself. Therefore, there is not, will not be, and should not be sought, a critical "purity" that moves away from the whole as if the subject were in a position of moral superiority to the object of capitalist society.

Using Brohm's lens, the concrete experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli seems to have no relevance, or if it does, it would be "separated" from football itself, which would end up breaking the very idea of totalization defended. Also, it would not be able to truly comprehend its complexity, since its relation with football is fundamental for its own establishment and re-establishment. In this sense, Brohm's critique seems insufficient to understand this experience, which is also proven when comparing his construction of the "emotional plague" and the typical antifascism of this fan community.

When Brohm and Perelman state that football is an "emotional plague", they relate this mass sport to fascism, but in the case of the historical rebellion present in the FC St. Pauli, what was created within that fan community was just the opposite. Since the 1980s - when there was a neo-Nazi trend in the stands in Germany - until more recent years, the most active part of the fan base shares anti-fascist ideas and creates campaigns and projects that are antagonistic to far right movements. Moreover, as seen, the football logic of "winning at any cost" argued by the authors, does not apply to this more rebellious portion, who engage in struggles against the unbridled advance of the commodity-form under their club, even if it means a less competitive team.

Jean-Marie Brohm's "traditional" critical analysis of football has much merit when it reflects on the political-ideological function of "opium" assumed by this spectacle-sport in capitalist society. It is a vision that focuses on the universal. Indeed, football is a product of capitalism and can generally serve as this depoliticizing opium that contaminates people.

However, understanding it only from this point of view, treating it as an infallible universal - which structurally prevents any use of this context for purposes of resistance by particular movements - hinders the recognition and understanding of critical political potentialities that may exist within it, as is the case with this experience.

Allied to this, criticism for the author presupposes a minimum of distance, a separation. In this sense, Brohm analyzes football as something external to himself, as a problematic object, a product of capitalism, distant from his position as a subject, and also distant from a “revolutionary subject”.

Consequently, it is an approach that seems to place the struggle for emancipation from capitalism as something that exists in a consciousness external to the totality, and football “breaks” this consciousness by fulfilling internal structural functions. This is mainly due to the fact that Jean-Marie Brohm does not carry out the journey of capitalist social forms mentioned throughout this thesis that help to understand that there is no externality from totality.

Thus, Brohm’s contribution is still part of a theoretical tendency of Marxism criticized by John Holloway, which represents a dualist separation between subject and object, as if capitalist society, and football, were being analyzed from the “outside”.

From this fundamental difference of analysis, it is believed that it is relevant to demonstrate how the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans can gain a new interpretation with Holloway’s theoretical contribution. It is the bridge that allows a comparison between these authors from different moments of Marxism. While Brohm starts from a critical tradition around the notion of “opium of the people”, making this separation between subject and object, Holloway comes from more recent schools of Marxism, interpreting Marx’s work as a theory of struggle, based on movement, antagonism, social forms, and the imperfections of the capitalist totality.

With that in mind, John Holloway’s reflection brought forth in the first chapter could be an important source to add to critical thinking about football in capitalist society, and especially to open up other possibilities to understand the rebel experience of the FC St. Pauli fans and other anti-capitalist movements that can be found in this context.

In opposition to the subject-object dualism, for Holloway, capitalist society is like a “*Gegenstand*”, a socially constituted object in which all people, that is, the subjects, are inside the object itself producing and reproducing it daily. Thus, because it is a totality of social relations, the object depends on human action, not only for its emergence, but also for its constant reproduction, it does not exist without the social activity of the subjects.



As a result, there is no actual dualism between subject and object, since there is no way for the subject to “leave” this social totality and analyze it from “outside”, the totality is constituted precisely by the relations assumed by the subject. Everything is in totality. It is a great exercise of totalization, but different from that proposed by Brohm.

Jean-Marie Brohm seems to treat football as an object that is a product of capitalism but that is still separate from himself as the subject of critical analysis, while Holloway’s proposal totalizes the subject itself, allowing one to understand that, in fact, everything is interconnected within the social totality. In this sense, even Brohm, when he buys some commodity in a small neighborhood shop, he is connected to football through the inevitable capitalist forms of social relations, because, in the end, they are both parts of the same social whole, the same totality, as a relation of separation-in-unity.

Therefore, for Holloway, it is the subjects themselves who reproduce this object they are part of, it is an object constituted by the totality of capitalist social relations. However, this does not happen randomly, but through the social forms, also called by the author as modes of existence of social relations under the capitalist mode of production.

The category of social form is fundamental to understand that our sociability acquires a format from the repetition of capitalist social relations. Marx in “Capital” provides the basis for understanding this category, which has been and continues to be researched, mainly by the authors of the so-called “new Marxism”. As seen at the beginning of this thesis, capitalist social forms emerge historically and are typical of this sociability, such as the commodity-form, value-form, money-form, state political form and legal form.

These social forms give a shape to our relations, it is not an individual, group or class choice to be subordinated to them. They permeate our social lives in a coercive way. Following the simple example of buying a commodity in a small neighborhood shop, us who live in capitalism need to relate to other people through money to survive, need to buy commodities to satisfy our needs, need to sell our labor power, all behind a legal and political form that guarantees these relations.

As we are already born into this sociability, this process of reproduction of society has an appearance of automaticity, naturalness, as if it were predetermined and impossible to be broken, but in fact, according to Holloway, social forms are processes in motion in constant exercise of establishment and re-establishment, always with an element of uncertainty and openness.

This is due to the fact that the capitalist social relations that constitute this format of sociability are permeated by struggle, antagonism and conflict. Therefore, for Holloway,

while there is no dichotomy between subject and object, there is also no separation between the logic of capitalist social relations and struggle. Thus, social forms are also forms of class struggle in constant movement.

The result of this is that because social forms are dynamic struggles, they end up containing their own antithesis. In this sense, capitalist society is a fetishized and alienated society, but the reason we can recognize it this way is because the antithesis of that society is present within itself.

This leads to a fundamental consequence:

If the totality is composed of social relations that acquire forms and carry their own antithesis because they are permeated by struggle, the potential to overcome capitalism is not present in an “exterior” of the totality, but in its own interior. The critique of capitalist society then begins not to assume a position of exteriority to the object, but to recognize that the subject is within the object itself reproducing it, and also resisting it.

Such a factor can be recognized from the various struggles against the capitalist system that have happened and are happening historically. These struggles always start from within the socially constituted object itself, from the totality, and are therefore always under constant pressure from the logic of its forms to be destroyed, neutralized, or absorbed.

It is a force that pulls our activities, our social relations, into capitalist forms of social relations. So even when people try to rebel against the system and create other forms of social relations, there is this “vacuum” that sucks them back into the logic of the system.

However, contrary to the possible understanding that there is nothing that can be done against this force, Holloway states that the very fact of recognizing and criticizing capitalist domination from within the totality demonstrates that this is not true.

Since capitalist social relations are inherently conflictive, behind and beyond this process of cohering to the logic of the system, there is a constant movement in the opposite direction, against this cohesion. In this sense, there is a constant movement against the money-form, against the value-form, and against the other social forms, seeking the creation of different forms of social relations.

This resistance can be recognized in reality through the various anti-capitalist social movements of recent decades that try to resist this process of being subsumed into the logic of totality. They are movements of in-against-and-beyond the totality, conceptualized by the author as “cracks”, fissures within the social whole itself.

Holloway’s concept of “crack” is an open question-concept, which is characteristic of the openness of his thought. In this sense, it is not something that seeks to provide a recipe for

how to overcome capitalism, its main purpose is to recognize that there are movements, struggles, that demonstrate an instability in the capitalist totality that appears to be perfect.

It is a change of perspective to understand the capitalist totality not by its solidity, but by its weaknesses and contradictions.

Therefore, for the author, there are emancipatory potentials within this very totality that if expanded, multiplied, and connected, can cause a process of multiple ruptures in the capitalist “wall”.

These cracks must be seen from the very dynamic of struggle against capitalist social forms. They are movements of rebellion that move from the particular against the cohesive force of the totality. They begin from a denial of the system, but more than that, this denial is accompanied by an attempt to create other forms of social relations different from the typical capitalist format, an other-doing.

Because they are dynamic, creative and experimental, cracks are also learning-in-struggle experiences, according to the concrete conditions of the struggle. Therefore, they are also unpredictable, since this openness can either lead to their adaptation and preservation, or to a “freezing”, because of lack of action or a reabsorption into the logic of capitalist forms of social relations.

Although Holloway claims that cracks break the very logic of dimensionality, the author offered a few dimensions that allowed a more concrete visualization, as seen in the first chapter, they are: space, activity-related and time

With regard to space, a crack can be a territory, a place, in which people seek to resist and move in the opposite direction of capitalist social forms. As for example, the autonomous territories of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, in which they seek to build a more horizontal society, against the commodity-form, the state political form and the other forms of social relations of capitalist society.

The activity-related crack can be a struggle for the de-commodification of activities and the transfer of activities to popular control, as a movement of resistance to capital control in areas such as water, nature in general, education, etc.

The last dimension mentioned by Holloway is that of time. For the author, a crack can be a temporal moment of struggle that is not necessarily prolonged, such as a protest against capitalism, for example, and although it appears to be incapable of bringing about structural change on its own, it still demonstrates that capitalist cohesion is not a perfect totality.

In short, for Holloway, cracks are spaces, activities, and moments of negation-and-creation, struggles of subjects, “ordinary” people, rebels, who deny the logic of

the capitalist totality, seeking to walk against the constant force of its cohesion, fighting against commodification. And, at the same time, illuminating other forms of relations, through an other-doing, an other social practice.

These cracks are not understood through a dogmatism that defines them as “right” or “wrong”, but rather as creative movements that are based on the very dynamism of the concrete struggle of in-against-and-beyond the totality. Thus, they are not “pure”, and the search for cracks does not take place through a moral idea of a community of “saints”, what is sought is to recognize that there are these struggles that resist the totality, even though they are limited, and contradictory.

For Holloway, if we perceive them through the capitalist logic and its cohering process that appears perfect, these struggles should not exist, they do not make sense within the rationality of the totality, but they still do, they are still fighting for the “impossible”.

Returning to the last chapter, it was possible to see through some events how the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli have been resisting the subsumption of everything by the commodity-form, even if that means a struggle against the club’s administration, which inevitably manages the club in a football world subsumed by capitalist logic and under a constant pressure of commodifying even more.

One such action mentioned in the last chapter is the denial of some fans to wear official merch from the club. It is a protest against the commodification of FC St. Pauli’s rebel image, since the “Jolly Roger”, the pirate anti-systemic flag, is now a big source of revenue for the club and is commonly used by the administration for financial advantage. In this sense, many rebel fans use their own DIY (Do it yourself) materials as an act of revolt against this capitalist advance of the commodity-form under something that was essentially an anti-systemic symbol, trying to maintain their historical resistance and criticality alive, even if that means less income for FC St. Pauli.

Another action mentioned was the “Sozialromantikers” movement, in which thousands of fans united in opposition to the direction FC St. Pauli was taking after promotion to the first division of Bundesliga, which was played in the 2010/2011 season.

Through a virtual manifesto, many anonymous fans wrote against the commercial path that was being followed by the administration with some questionable marketing campaigns. At that moment, they stated that they knew how important it is to have income in professional football, however, some acts of the administration were going too far, and they wanted to stop the process.

In this sense, some phrases of the fans in that period deserve to be revisited, such as FC Sankt Pauli is “like an island in a world which is only interested in the monetary value of everything” (Hauth, 2011) and “we all rather do without some of the modern football’s temptations even if they might be financially interesting” (*ibid*).

The movement gained momentum and spread through the fan community, resulting in an organized protest in which the fans, using the “Jolly Rouge” as a symbol, filled Millerntor’s stands with red clothing, flags and banners, setting a threatening tone to the club’s management at the time. As a result, it managed to return a dialog between the fans and the administration, in other words, the fans re-established more control over their club.

It is important to emphasize that in addition to these resistance movements of the rebel fans within their own football club, they also engage in local and global political actions, and more specifically, in the issues of the district in which the club is located. As seen in the last chapter, they participate in social projects in the community, together with campaigns such as to welcome refugees and against fascism, racism and homophobia. Also, they are present in actions against gentrification, rising rents and homelessness in the district of St. Pauli.

A symbiotic relation with the district makes them bring local problems into the Millerntor-Stadion, giving it more publicity. The stands of the stadium are also used as an anti-systemic propaganda tool to bring “external” political matters from other regions of the city, country and world.

All these actions come together with awareness-raising and a constant goal of having more political engagement from other FC St. Pauli fans, especially young people seeking more involvement in active political life.

Thus, this experience goes in the opposite direction of the general function of depoliticization that football has in capitalist sociability. Unlike what was seen through Brohm’s thought, these fans use football to broaden the scope of their political struggles, organization and solidarity, while supporting their club, creating a complex relationship between these spheres.

In this regard, the rebel fans not only say “no” to the tendencies of football in capitalism, but they also seek to create bonds of solidarity with social projects in the community, protests, going beyond the “borders” of the modern spectacle-sport itself. Thus, it is possible to recognize here, both an aspect of negation of the logic of the system as it is, and an aspect of creation of something new with those solidarity bonds.

Consequently, it seems that it is possible to say that the rebel fans do a movement of in-against-and-beyond totality in their struggle against the commodification of FC St. Pauli together with their social relations that are formed according to a non-capitalist logic.

What at first may appear to be a movement that is restricted to the context of football, ends up starting from the particular and affecting the very cohesion of the capitalist totality, since there is this struggle against the cohering “force” that pulls everything and everyone to the typical format of this sociability.

Obviously, this is far from having a moral “purity”, the contradiction is always present, especially because whether we want it or not, everyone is still within this totality that permeates all of our lives.

In this sense, their experience is often limited by their very existence within the totality, generating contradictions. As an example, many people do not care about the advance of the commodity-form and only wish to see their club competitive, and even the rebels understand that generating income is necessary to maintain a professional football club existing and competing. Also, resistance itself ends up limited by still existing within the totality, and even the DIY products, that are produced autonomously by the fans, are still within the capitalist totality and its forms.

But, anyway, we do not seek moral purity here, but rather a recognition that there is a struggle that tries to move in the opposite direction of the cohesive force of the capitalist society, fighting against the commodity-form, and demonstrating how the process of cohesion to the totality is not something automatic, but rather permeated by struggles and resistances, indicating then a flaw, an opening within the totality.

That is why this struggle existing in this fan community does not make sense according to the rationality of current football’s world. It is very difficult to imagine fans going against the management of their own club when it comes to bringing in more revenue to increase competitiveness, yet it happens at FC St. Pauli, this “island” in the commodified world of football where capitalist temptations, even if financially interesting, are not automatically accepted by the fans.

It is also interesting to note that the dimensions mentioned by Holloway when dealing with cracks are present in the experience of these fans, but end up intertwining in their own complexity.

Spatially, the district of St. Pauli was extremely important for the historical emergence of this rebellious experience, and also for its preservation and creation of ties with the community of the district, with a symbiotic relationship between the two that is difficult to be

well delimited. At the same time, the Millerntor Stadion is a sports venue that not only serves as a space for the football spectacle, but also as an instrument of anti-systemic political propaganda.

It is also there that fans organize themselves, discuss politics and fight against the commodification of their club in the stands, which can already be related to the dimension of activities brought by Holloway, since these rebel fans are constantly fighting against the control of capital over their football club, moving then in the opposite direction of the system's cohering force.

The dimension of time is also present in the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans, both as the historical time of emergence and preservation of this rebellion, and also at every moment in which the fans unite for a common cause that challenges the capitalist totality.

By the very openness of the definition, it is difficult to state precisely that this experience is indeed a "crack", however, it is unquestionable that it demonstrates an imperfection, both in this world of football-spectacle — a product of capitalism with general depoliticizing functions — and in the very social totality we live in.

If Jean-Marie Brohm's contribution makes it difficult to understand or see potential in this experience of fan struggle, John Holloway's work regarding cracks, as movements of struggle in-against-and-beyond the capitalist totality itself, demonstrates an opening that may be important for the development of research on anti-capitalist movements within football, and their potential to affect the system's totality.

It is important to emphasize that one analysis does not need to discard the other, but can even serve as a complement, of course always considering their significant differences.

In any case, it is possible to recognize the general depoliticizing function that football fulfills in capitalist society, serving as a largely spread "opium" that distances people from their real social problems, as Brohm argued.

But also, this experience of the rebel fans of FC St. Pauli demonstrated throughout this thesis that there is also something more in the world of football. Which, according to Holloway's contribution and seeking to understand the totality from its weakness, it could be interpreted as a dynamic struggle that, starting from the particular, challenges the own totality which is part of, as a movement of in-against-and-beyond that moves in the opposite direction of capitalist social forms' logic, showing new solidarity possibilities and how the totality is imperfect.

This understanding could give a new meaning to the potential of football for the Marxist thought, trying to focus more on the concrete struggles within this context and

recognizing resistances to the dominant logic, with the help of John Holloway's contribution and search for "cracks".

Important to say that it would not be an exercise similar to what was done by the authors criticized by Brohm and Perelman, since it does not seek to separate a "positive" point of football from its rest, but rather to recognize that all this is present within the object itself. The "negative" parts of being a product of capitalism with functions that help to maintain the system, are side by side with struggles that point to a different logic of society, even from within the totality.

It is a seek to affirm that the criticism of capitalism does not come from an exteriority of the system, but from inside, even with the contradictions and challenges that this ends up generating

In the end, the capacity of football, as the most popular spectacle sport in the world, to be a tool for political organization and solidarity ties would not be just discarded, much less romanticized, but rather understood from the lenses of the very contradiction and complexity that is living under, and against, the capitalist mode of production.



## CONCLUSION

From the objective of proposing a Marxist dialog between the authors Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway through a reflection on the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans, the journey of this thesis began.

Initially, the study of capitalist social forms was addressed, understanding what the commodity-form, value-form, money-form, legal form and state political form are, and how they relate with each other in the great complex that is the capitalist totality.

Next, we went through John Holloway's critical contribution on the potentiality of breaking the totality through in-against-and-beyond movements within the social whole itself. It was understood that this totality is a socially constituted object produced and reproduced daily by the subjects themselves through their forms of antagonistic social relations, relations that are under a constant cohering force that "pulls" us to the logic of the capitalist format.

All this is a great dynamic, there is a constant process of establishment and reestablishment of forms in the capitalist totality. Such a process appears to be automatic, but in fact, it faces resistance, since the social relations that acquire the capitalist format are relations of struggle, they are conflictive, antagonistic.

As Holloway argues, this leads us to understand that there are struggles that seek to move in the opposite direction within the whole itself, as cracks of particulars scattered across the "wall" of the capitalist totality. Consequently, by existing within this social whole, the cracks are inevitably contradictory and "impure", but even so, they continue to exist on the edge of impossibility around the world, as dynamic struggles that deny capitalist logic and create forms of other-doing. Also, because they fight against this dominant logic, these cracks do not make sense when analyzed from the rationality of accumulation invoked by the capitalist mode of production.

In the second chapter, the path went through the relationship between capitalism, its typical social forms, and football, one of the modern sports that emerge within the shape of capitalist sociability and ends up becoming a great mass spectacle.

It was understood that this relationship is not static, it is dynamic and influenced by the very structural changes of sociability, especially in the field of communications, affecting and altering this mass spectacle-sport. It was also understood that the world of institutionalized professional football is a commodified world of football, because it already emerged according to the format imposed by the commodity-form in the totality of social

relations, but also, it is under a constant force of commodifying that pulls football more and more to the logic of the system.

In the second part of the chapter, it was brought up Jean-Marie Brohm's criticism of modern sports as a typical institution of the capitalist mode of production that consolidates itself as an Ideological State Apparatus. According to him, this institution fulfills ideological functions for the reproduction of capitalist social relations and maintenance of the system's order, among these functions, is the political-ideological one, as an "opium of the people".

As seen, this function of "opium of the people" moves people away from their real problems experienced in capitalist society and transports them to an artificial and meaningless world, depoliticizing them and emptying the political struggle. In this sense, Brohm, alongside Marc Perelman, considers that football, as a mass spectacle, fulfills this function of opium not only in relation to the masses in general, but also in relation to intellectuals who close their eyes to its true nature, which can only be understood from a process of double totalization.

That is, football should be considered as inseparable from the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of capitalist society, while at the same time it should not be attempted to "separate" positive and negative aspects within football. Such separation exercises end up obscuring the reality that exists behind the appearance of football, a reality of corruption, millionaire transactions, racism, and other social questions faced in capitalism.

For Brohm and Perelman, this depoliticizing opium that is football, spreads like an extremely contagious emotional plague and psychologically affects the masses, removing any possibility of seeing potential for solidarity political organization and awareness of the working class.

Also, they argue that criticism needs a distance, and football does not demonstrate any position of divergence from the society it is part of, it has always been an instrument of entertainment to compensate for the social problems experienced under capitalism. In this sense, for the authors, it is possible to recognize political protests happening in football stadiums, but when counting "only" football, these issues lose all potentiality.

The third chapter looked at the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans, since its historical formation from a process in which autonomists, punks, and squatters from Hafensstraße started to go to the stands of the Millerntor-Stadion in the 1980s. This group brought their anti-fascist and anti-capitalist political principles, along with their pirate flag "Jolly Roger", and ended up fundamentally changing the club's fan community. This was also influenced by the establishment of Millerntor Roar!, a fanzine for fans that also brought

political issues, and Fanladen, a fan project that became a meeting place for fans where, along with football, political issues were also discussed.

These anti-systemic principles have become part of the fan base, giving a direction to the political actions that have emerged and continue to emerge in fan practice. In a commodified world of football, this generates constant tensions with the club's administration. This is due to the fact that the most active fans, who carry this rebellion, fight against the aggressive advance of the commodity-form within FC St. Pauli.

One of these movements is against the commodification of the club's rebel image, the "Jolly Roger", which emerged as something anti-systemic, but has become a major source of revenue. Against this, several fans refuse to use official club products and prefer to cheer with their DIY (Do it yourself) merch.

Another movement of struggle took place in the 2010/2011 season, in which a group of anonymous fans, known as "Sozialromantiker", wrote an online manifesto against the direction that the club was heading towards excessive commercialization, with marketing actions that went against the principles that permeate the fan community. This movement gained strength, made itself present throughout the Millerntor stands, and managed to re-establish dialogues with the administration of the time.

In addition to these resistance movements within the club, rebel fans also participate in social projects, campaigns and protests in the district, always with a critical mindset towards the social problems faced in capitalist society. These fans are always looking for more political engagement from other fans, especially young people. At the same time, they use football as a platform for political protests and dissemination of their rebellious principles inside the stadium

In the last chapter, as a final exercise, we sought to take up the ideas of Jean-Marie Brohm and John Holloway to provide a Marxist dialog between the authors through a reflection on the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans.

In conclusion, it is understood that Brohm's contribution is important to critically understand the relation between football and capitalism in general, but that it is also insufficient to understand this particular rebellious experience. This is due to the fact that Brohm discards the possibility of seeing political potential against the capitalist system in a world of football that is a product of this sociability and that fulfills a function of depoliticization as "opium of the people". However, in the case of the experience of the rebellious fans of FC St. Pauli, it is not possible to separate their "struggles" from football; they are intertwined, and end up being confused in a relational complex.

On the other hand, John Holloway's contribution, based on the dynamism of the struggle and the imperfection of the process of cohering to the capitalist format — by addressing the “cracks” within the totality itself — allows us to see potential in this rebellious experience without denying the fact that it is still inside the context of football within this capitalist totality. Obviously, this is crossed by contradictions and challenges, but it is still a resistance movement that demonstrates a flaw in this capitalist social whole that appears perfect.

In this sense, it is believed that this proposed dialogue was important to advance Marxist thought in the context of football and possible anti-capitalist movements, as well as it provided a non-restrictive interpretation of the rebellious experience of FC St. Pauli fans in the commodified world of football.

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