

Stakeholders matter - as Man United fans seem to be sug...

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A small number of [Manchester United fans staged a pitch protest](#) at Old Trafford yesterday. The result was the postponement of the match with old rivals Liverpool. They had, of course, also been partners of Manchester United in the ignominious European Super League.

It's a little hard to be sure what the pitch invasions was really about. There seemed to have been little forethought given to a demand - apart from the fact that the fans wanted an end to the ownership of Manchester United by the Glazer family.

I can understand and sympathise with that. But as a lesson in protest this one delivered a real punch line - which is that to make the effort worthwhile you have to say what you want, and not just protest about what is.

The simple fact is that replacing the Glazers with another foreign owner would achieve nothing much, if at all. The maintenance of an oligopolistic power elite in football would continue in that case. The exploitation of fans would remain the norm. The indifference of the club to their concerns would definitely remain. So surely that is not what those who protested wanted, was it?

The alternative would have to be fan ownership. But how is that to be financed? How too is control for the benefit of the community of Manchester above all else, whatever the worldwide support might be, to be ensured?

I support the fan ownership of clubs.

I think local authorities might have a large part to play as the custodian of golden shares that protect the community and fan base of football clubs against commercial predation.

I think that for football to survive a change in this direction is essential - or the gap between the name, place and those who live there will become so remote that football will simply become elite sport and big business (on which route it is already firmly headed, hence the need for disruption now).

This though needs planning. And yesterday did not deliver a demand for that change of direction. That was a waste of an opportunity, and they do not come around too often.

As in all companies, stakeholders need to be at the heart of football. A serious plan to make that possible is required, that fans can really subscribe to. I hope someone can deliver on this. And that some big names - I am looking at you Gary Lineker - can get behind it.